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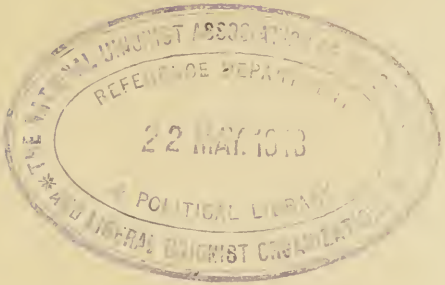
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TRADE UNIONS

TRADE UNIONS

By JOSEPH CLAYTON

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TRADE UNIONS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

THE workman's trade union plays so large a part to-day in the industrial and social life of civilised nations that it cannot wisely be overlooked or misunderstood by statesmen, or ignored by that general public by whose goodwill the statesman rules.

The very complexities of modern life, placing our daily needs and comforts at the mercy of a multitude of persons, make the trade union so potent for good or ill. A national coal strike by the Miners' Federation sees the price of necessary household fuel rise to prohibitive heights throughout the land, and the temporary stoppage of a multitude of industries. A strike of railwaymen or other transport workers may paralyse all trade for many a day and bring disaster to thousands. Too commonly it is only when a grave labour "crisis" occurs that those who are not members of trade unions give any serious consideration to the existence of these workmen's associations. And the want of understanding is a fruitful cause of delay in the settlement of trade union demands.

The more widely the purposes and objects of trade unions are known, the more carefully their aims and methods are studied, the more readily will the justice,

or injustice, of their cause be recognised when, as it occasionally happens, the rest of the community are at their mercy for the conveniences of daily life.

Moreover, the trade union is essentially a British institution. It has been carried from this country to every colony where the demand for the labour of skilled or unskilled European folk is uttered, and the working people of every nation in Europe have taken to the organisation of the union, following the example set in Britain in the nineteenth century. Throughout the world of intelligent white labour it seems to the working class that for obtaining better conditions of work, or maintaining existing conditions in the stress of commercial competition, the trade union is a first necessity.

Not only for its promises of monetary gain and assurances of safety against gross oppression is the trade union popular. The willingness to co-operate, the desire for fellowship and social intercourse, the instinct that makes some of us set up and join clubs whenever and wherever, at home or abroad, the opportunity is presented—and others seek the communities of the religious orders—all the various manifestations of the spirit of association, in fact, help to account for the trade union.

For the trade union possesses at once the qualities of a social club, of a council of government, of an army at war; and so makes its appeal to the cheerful average person, to whom good-fellowship in everyday life is essential, to the ambitious, seeking power to order the destinies of mankind and change its customs, to the fighting man (or woman) ready to contend to the uttermost and perish if needs be in the conflict—though the particular cause of battle may be but an extra halfpenny an hour. To some trade unionism is even as a

religion, so devoted are these to the spirit of association and human brotherhood.

And since the growth of civilisation means not the retarding but the development of social instincts and habits, it is obvious that while common associated human labour exists trade unions will increase and flourish, their action in the world for good or ill depending chiefly on the outlook and judgment of their leaders, the character of the rank and file, and the discernment shown by legislators and others in high authority in their dealings with an organised working class.

The subject is of vast importance and of vital interest to the life of nations.

Here, within the pages of a "People's Book," we can but trace in outline the history of the modern trade union—sketching lightly in from time to time a few of the more prominent leaders of the movement—and describe quite briefly the methods and the finance of British trade unionism at the present day. Only in the case of one or two of the comparatively new labourers' unions and of one typical old-established union of mechanics—the Amalgamated Society of Engineers—have we attempted to show in any detail the working practice of trade unionism, and only a dozen of the hundred principal trade unions have been picked out for examination of expenditure.

These examples must suffice, for they cover a wide area of the ground we are exploring and reveal the general plan of trade union management.

Concerned, here, with trade unionism familiar to us in Great Britain, all account of its work and influence in other lands is left untold. But we may note, shortly, that in France, Spain, and Italy the trade unions are far more revolutionary and less constitutional than in

England. The Syndicalism of the General Confederation of Trade Unions in France is avowedly hostile to the State and seeks to establish a social revolution by securing the control of industry. In Italy the trade unionists would ignore the State and build up a commonwealth of their own by creating self-governing industrial societies on a co-operative basis. In this respect the glassblowers have already achieved a distinct success, though time has yet to show whether the experiment can endure. In Spain, Barcelona is the centre of trade unionism and of anarchist propaganda.

In Germany and Belgium the trade unions are either born of Socialist teaching and directed by political social-democrats, or they are organisations of Catholic and Christian workmen.

The Australian trade unions are as political as the trade unions of France, Italy, and Spain are anarchist and those of Germany social democratic or Christian. And the result of political trade unionism in Australia has been the rise of the Labour party in that country, the accession of a Labour Ministry to power, and the passage into law of several legislative proposals in a collectivist direction—for the improvement of working-class conditions.

America has every variety of trade unionism—a natural consequence of immigration from every land in Europe—and the struggle between organised labour and concentrated capital is waged more fiercely, more violently, and less scrupulously in the United States than in any other country in the world.

Another omission in these pages is all reference to the Insurance Act of 1912. It is far too early at present to estimate how the Act will affect the fortunes of British trade unionism, and prophetic *obiter dicta* on the point

would be of little use. We know that some of the unions have added a very considerable number of members to their books since the Act was passed, and in the course of a few years it will be seen to what extent the increased membership and the new financial engagements of the unions are a source of strength to the movement.

If this little book serves as an introduction to the study of trade unions its purpose will be served.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL

It is not permitted in a short outline of the rise of British trade unions to attempt any scientific investigation of their origin, or to join the discussion as to their relation to the trade guilds of the Middle Ages. For us a trade union is an association of workmen, formed and existing for the purpose of protecting its members and improving the conditions of their employment.[1] When British industry was largely in the hands of small masters, and journeymen and apprentices might and did pass freely from the ranks of the employed to the employer, the trade union as we know it to-day had no real existence.

Hence it is not till the eighteenth century, with the growth of machinery, "the definite separation between the functions of the capitalist and the workman," and

[1] "A trade union, as we understand the term, is a continuous association of wage-earners for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of their employment."—Webb, *History of Trade Unionism.*

all those changes that made the industrial revolution, that the beginnings of trade unionism may be discerned clearly, and acknowledged without dispute.

At first it is rather as a friendly society that the trade union is seen; for throughout the eighteenth century, and more particularly in the latter half, small clubs of artizans and labourers, with sick and funeral funds, flourished widely. These clubs naturally fostered talk on questions of wages and conditions of work, so that Adam Smith noted: "People of the same trade seldom meet together, even for merriment and discussion, but the conversation ends in a conspiracy against a public, or in some contrivance to raise prices." And soon we read of various combinations of journeymen tailors, of West of England woollen-workers, Yorkshire wool-combers, and Midland stocking framework-knitters all alert, chiefly to keep up wages and maintain the legal restrictions on the number of apprentices.

Then in 1799 and 1800, partly under the influence of the new teaching of Adam Smith, but much more from fear of the democratic tendencies excited by the French Revolution, the natural objection of the capitalist to high wages was satisfied by the Combination Laws—Acts of Parliament, hastily passed, making all associations of workmen (and of employers) illegal, and the joining of such associations a criminal offence. These Acts by no means abolished all trade unions; according to some contemporary evidence the Combination Laws were practically a dead-letter as far as many important industries were concerned. But from time to time they were invoked against associations of workmen and heavy penalties were inflicted. Inevitably, too, this repressive legislation drove men to the formation of secret societies with strange unlawful oaths of initiation,

seditious rites, and revolutionary emblems. Liable to prosecution for conspiracy, at the most peaceful gatherings members were apt to colour their social intercourse with mysterious passwords and dangerous sentiments, so that to the more nervous and imaginative the melodrama of these occasions seemed of serious purpose.

The Combination Laws were repealed in 1824: Joseph Hume, instigated and primed by Francis Place, a master-tailor at Charing Cross, quietly persuading the House of Commons to agree thereto.[1]

No sooner were the Combination Laws repealed than trade unions burst into new life all over the country. Higher wages were demanded, and an aggressive policy was pursued by these new unions. Strikes were the order of the day, and the "labour unrest" of 1824–5 brought the shipping industry on the North-east Coast to a temporary standstill. The alarmed employers took action in Parliament and sought to put down all workmen's societies.

They failed to do this, but a fresh Act was passed in 1825 prohibiting all combinations of persons for unlawful objects, but expressly permitting association for the purpose of regulating wages or hours of labour. By this Act the existence of trade unions was recognised by law, and the right to strike was admitted.

A period of bad trade depressed all labour organisations for a year or two, but by 1829 this depression had passed, and the next phase of trade unionism was a revolutionary activity that aimed at one General Union of all trades. First a "Grand General Union" of cotton-spinners was established, to be followed speedily

[1] The story of Place's patient and successful labours, of his tireless persistence and highly skilful wire-pulling, can be read in the *Life of Francis Place* by Graham Wallas.

by the "National Association for the Protection of Labour," and in 1834 by Robert Owen's "Grand National Consolidated Trades Union." Men and women of every trade and occupation simply rushed into trade unionism, and the membership of the "Grand National" was estimated at half a million. Agricultural labourers of Kensington, Walham Green, Fulham, and Hammersmith were enrolled, and women's lodges of "Operative Bonnet Makers" and "Female Tailors" flourished.

That remarkable man, Robert Owen, was a forerunner of present-day Syndicalists and industrial unionists; for Owen's plan was that the working people employed in any industry should become owners of that industry, and that each trade should have its single union (instead of a number of unions for every subdivision of the work), these unions to be all associated in one National Trades Union.

The "Grand National" was of too loosely woven texture to last. Its organisation was defective. Sectional interests suffered, and sectional strikes ended in defeat and disaffection. The Whig Government of the day regarded a general "Trades Union" with stern disapproval. Nassau Senior, Oxford's professor of Political Economy, reporting on the situation to Lord Melbourne, advised that every attempt to get members into the union and all picketing at strikes should be punished by imprisonment, and that if this drastic treatment failed, then the funds of the union "deposited in Savings Banks or otherwise" should be confiscated.

In various parts of the country prosecutions for unlawful conspiracy took place, and the case of the Dorchester labourers attracted wide attention. The general wage of agricultural labourers who were members of the National Trades Union was 10*s.* a week,

but in Dorset, where no union existed, they had sunk to 7*s*. Therefore half a dozen labourers—Methodists and local preachers—set about starting a "Grand Lodge" of the National Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers at the village of Tolpuddle, Dorsetshire. Certain farmers at once took action. The labourers, who, it was admitted, had done nothing except take the oath of initiation into the National Union, were committed for trial, and at the assizes sentenced to seven years' transportation for conspiracy. So hurriedly were these proceedings wrought that though the trial only took place on March 18, 1834, the prisoners were on their way to Botany Bay before April 15. The Government defended the sentence, but public agitation would not be silenced. In 1836 the remainder of the sentences was remitted, and when two years more had elapsed the men returned home.[1] The oath on joining was, however, generally dropped by the trade unions after this case, and the initiation ceremonies were shorn of their ritual; till in time all solemnities, beyond the formal signing of the name, disappeared.

Internal weakness, hostility of the authorities, and retaliation by the employers broke up the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union. While the unionists strove to bring every workman into the union, the masters on their side replied by refusing to employ union men, and demanding signatures to what was known as the "document." The "document" which the masters presented was a confession of non-unionism, and to sign it was unconditional surrender. The "Grand National" crumbled to pieces. Local strikes and lock-outs ended in starvation. In sullen despair

[1] In 1912 a public monument was unveiled in Dorset to these transported labourers.

men yielded to the "document" and unionism ebbed. Politics for a time absorbed the interest of the working class, and Chartism rallied to its banner the bolder spirits.

But trade unions never became extinct. The miners and the cotton-spinners and other bodies of workmen had their societies, and when the Chartist movement collapsed in 1848 and commerce became steadier and more expansive, unionism again revived. The modern trade union really dates from that revival, for the men who organised and led the trade union world in 1850–60 built on lasting foundations.

Men of strong character, considerable ability, and business-like habits were these leaders, who—working together in close association as a committee of amalgamated societies—are known in the annals of trade unionism as "The Junta." Their names are historical: William Allan, Robert Applegarth, Daniel Guile, Edwin Coulson, and George Odger. Others too may be recalled who were conspicuous at that time in the work of constructive unionism—notably William Newton, John Kane, Alexander MacDonald, William Dronfield, a Sheffield compositor, George Howell, Henry Broadhurst, and George Shipton.

These men were the real rulers of British trade unionism for more than thirty years.

Steadily, soberly, cautiously they built up the trade unions of the artizan and mechanic, deprecating all violence or revolutionary aims, and striving to win respect and acceptance from the nation at large. Education, parliamentary action, and constitutional methods were the creed of the Junta and their allies. Strikes were not encouraged, but were recognised as inevitable on occasion. Only they must be conducted with strict submission to law and order. The Socialism of Robert

Owen was out of date, the notion of a general trades union was impracticable. Political and social progress must be on the lines laid down by the Liberal thinkers of the middle Victorian Era, on the principles of free trade and free competition, with freedom for the workman to make the best of his labour by collective action in a trade union.

These traditions governed the unions when the leaders of the "sixties" had passed away, and only in the last twenty years have they been challenged and overthrown by a generation with principles and ideals other than those of nineteenth-century Liberalism. The tradition that character and a high sense of responsibility are necessary for an important trade union official has remained, and this also was created by the Junta.

Who were these men of influence so potent, and of abilities for working-class organisation so rare in England sixty years ago? And what actually and in detail did they accomplish? William Allan, the son of a Scotch cotton-mill manager, was an engineer, in 1843 a member of the "Journeymen Steam Engine and Machine Makers Society," and in 1847 its general secretary. He and William Newton, another engineer (subsequently a prominent member of the old Metropolitan Board of Works), brought together the various engineering societies, and in 1851 these societies were united in the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. Allan was the general secretary of this society from 1851 till his death in 1874. At the close of 1851 the A.S.E. had 11,752 members, 121 branches, and £21,705 in the bank. In September 1912 the total membership of the A.S.E. was 138,947; the branches throughout the world numbered 764 (in the United Kingdom, 610); and the funds in hand, December 1911, amounted to £69,543.

Newton stood three times for Parliament (1862, 1868, 1875) as an Independent Labour candidate, without success. Two members of the A.S.E., Mr. G. N. Barnes (general secretary, 1896–1908) and Mr. Charles Duncan, have sat in Parliament as Labour representatives since 1906. A third member, the Right Hon. John Burns, has been M.P. for Battersea since 1892 and the President of the Local Government Board since 1906.

The A.S.E. keeps green the memory of its founders by the Allan and Newton Memorial Fund, which supplies prizes every year to members of the union or their sons for success in South Kensington Science and Art Examinations.

Robert Applegarth, the son of a quartermaster in the Royal Navy, was born in 1833. Twenty years later he was a working carpenter in Sheffield, and a member of the local trade union. In 1861 the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners was formed, and Applegarth became its general secretary the following year, holding office till his voluntary resignation in 1871.

By his inclusion in the Royal Commission on the Contagious Diseases Acts, 1871, Applegarth was the first trade unionist to sit on a Royal Commission; this and his active interest in national education, in the old "International Association of Working Men," and in various movements for political and social reform, all tended to improve the standing of an officer of a trade union in the eyes of the country.

Daniel Guile, born 1814, the son of a Liverpool shoemaker, was an ironfounder by trade, and the general secretary of the National Association of Ironfounders from 1863 till his retirement in 1881. "'Old Dan Guile,' as he was and always will be known, was as unbendable as an iron product from the mould. An old-fashioned,

uncompromising trade unionist, had he been able to have his will no State interference would have been necessary one way or the other. He advocated and sincerely believed that if every worker in a trade belonged to his union its perfect unity would be equal, and more than equal, to cope with capital. He contended if in addition to this unity all trades united in a federation no power capital possessed could withstand the march of labour to higher wages and shorter hours." [1] Guile opened the third Trade Union Congress, held in London, 1871, and was an early member of its Parliamentary Committee, and for some years its treasurer.

Edwin Coulson, the general secretary of the London Bricklayers, was a man of similar mind with Guile. Under his generalship the bricklayers became a strong National Union. Coulson presided at the Trade Union Congress in London, 1881, and from his address to the delegates we may take the following passage, because it fairly represents the views of the older trade union leaders of that time : " We are not violent revolutionists expecting an immediate cure, or wishing to have everything arranged and provided by a paternal Government, but we are prepared to demand that no obstacles shall be placed by Parliament or the ruling classes in the way of our complete industrial independence. We have not a fair field, neither have we favour."

George Odger, born 1820, the son of a Cornish miner, was a highly skilled shoemaker by trade, and a member of the Ladies' Shoemakers' Society. A leading spirit in all labour movements in London was Odger, and an extremely popular speaker. He helped to form the London Trades Council, was for ten years its secretary

[1] W. J. Davis, *History and Recollections of British Trade Union Congress.*

(1862-72), and twice (1870 and 1874) contested Southwark unsuccessfully as a Labour candidate against both Liberal and Conservative opponents. "An orator of remarkable power, he swayed popular meetings at his will, and was the idol of metropolitan Radicalism. But he was no mere demagogue. Beneath his brilliant rhetoric and emotional fervour there lay a large measure of political shrewdness, and he shared with his colleagues the capacity for deliberately concerted action and personal subordination." [1] While the rest of the Junta were entirely engaged in their trade union offices Odger remained a working shoemaker. He died in 1877, and his funeral was attended by enormous crowds of London workmen.

John Kane, a Northumbrian, born in 1819, was an ironworker at Gateshead, and from youth an ardent enthusiast for trade unionism. When the Amalgamated Ironworkers' Association was formed in 1868 he became its general secretary, and held the post till his death in 1876. Kane sat on the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress, contested Middlesborough as a Labour candidate in 1874 (polling over 1000 votes in a three-cornered fight), and, in the words of his trade union colleagues, "was a man of singular power, immense grasp of mind, and one in whom deceit never found a resting-place." So general was the respect in the north for this Labour leader that many employers not only attended his funeral, but subscribed towards a monument in his memory at Darlington.

Alexander MacDonald, born 1821, a working miner at the age of eight in a Lanarkshire coal-pit, was the man by whose efforts a National Union of Miners was formed. With a Scotchman's zeal for education he

[1] Webb, *History of Trade Unionism.*

managed to pass through Glasgow University, and then after a period of school-teaching devoted himself to the work of organising miners, amongst whom trade unionism was practically extinct in 1855. In 1863 the National Union was formed, and MacDonald, who now possessed independent means, became its president. In 1874 he was elected M.P. for Stafford; at the same time Mr. (now the Right Hon.) Thomas Burt was elected for Morpeth, and these two men were the first Labour representatives in Parliament. MacDonald was chairman of the Trade Union Congress Parliamentary Committee in 1875, but on accepting an invitation to serve on the Royal Commission on trade unions he retired from the committee. Till his death in 1881 Alexander MacDonald remained the miners' leader and M.P. and the untiring advocate of legislation. His three great questions were employers' liability for accidents, the abolition of all truck, and the adoption of safeguards in mines so as to reduce to a minimum the dangers miners were exposed to in their daily work.[1] In 1874 the Miners' National Union numbered 100,000 members. To-day the Miners' Federation of Great Britain has over 350,000 members, and counts some eighteen miners' representatives in the House of Commons.

Both George Howell (bricklayer) and Henry Broadhurst (stonemason) held office as secretary of the Parliamentary Committee (Howell, 1871–5; Broadhurst, 1875–85, 1886–90); both sat in Parliament; and both wrote their reminiscences of the trade union movement.

[1] "MacDonald may be fairly accepted as the first statesman of organised legislative effort. From the passing of the Metalliferous Mines Act in 1872 to the day of his death he never tired of appealing for more legislative protection for the colliers."—W. J. Davis.

Mr. George Shipton, also of the building trade, who is still alive, was George Odger's successor as secretary of the London Trades Council, and a prominent figure at the Trade Union Congress.

It is important to dwell on the work of these men, for they created the movement and guided the destinies of our trade unions for some twenty-five years. And by their work trade unionism not only became a permanent institution in our national life, it won recognition for its leaders as men of national repute. In Parliament, in Town and County Councils, on the local Bench of Magistrates, on Royal Commissions, and installed at the Board of Trade, the officials of the larger trade unions are seen in steadily increasing numbers since the days of the Junta, and are known and respected as men of character and of serious responsibility. The change in public opinion, with the knowledge that trade union leaders with their experience of working-class conditions of life and their training in organisation and administration are useful and efficient servants of the community, is primarily due to the Junta and its allies. These men had passed from the field when the unskilled labourers sought organisation in the eighties, and new ideals of unionism inflamed their successors.

In the years when the Junta ruled, the annual Congress of trade unions was established, the agricultural labourers' movement rose and fell, and direct representation in Parliament began.

Congress and parliamentary representation are discussed more fully in a later chapter; here a word must be given to the rural labourers' union and its short-lived prosperity.

Trade unionism is rarely stationary, and the flow of

1833–4 was repeated in 1871–4, when "labour unrest" was again a common phenomenon. Once more the agricultural labourers were touched by the general movement, and this time they had for their leader and organiser Joseph Arch, a fervent and gifted speaker. Arch, born at Barford, Warwickshire, in 1826, was himself an agricultural labourer, and when his fellow-labourers from several parishes in the country met together to discuss their grievances, in February 1872, his eloquence roused them to action. A strike for higher wages took place, which attracted wide sympathy, and this was followed in March by the formation of the Warwickshire Agricultural Labourers' Union. Arch then carried the propaganda throughout agricultural England, and everywhere, but more especially in the Midland and Eastern Counties, the labourers rallied to his impassioned appeal. At the end of 1872 the National Agricultural Labourers' Unions had a membership of 100,000, and a large number of independent local unions were in existence. This was high-water mark. The persistent and bitter hostility of the farmers, the rural land-owners, and the country magistrates to the union soon overpowered the labourers. Within a very few years of its birth the National Union was reduced to a few thousand members, and the local societies were dissolved. Arch remained faithful to his call, and after the enfranchisement of the rural householder, became the labourers' M.P. for N.W. Norfolk in 1885. In many districts, too, a rise of wages for the labourer followed the formation of a branch of the union; and the agitation generally encouraged a spirit of independence amongst the labourers, and attracted an attention in the country, that brought the parliamentary vote to the agricultural labourer. But the

isolation of the rural labourer was, and is still, against trade unionism. Where men or women are employed in large masses and work daily side by side a sense of fellowship and a social feeling arise which make association when the day's toil is over natural and easy. Sharing the same work, receiving the same wages, and working the same number of hours, at a common employment, to belong to a trade union is a simple performance for factory operatives, miners, bricklayers, and all mechanics and artizans in cities.

It is quite otherwise with the agricultural labourer. Little of his work is done in any companionship with his fellows, and he is directly under the eye of his employer, and not merged in a crowd. He lacks the backing of members when he is dissatisfied and would seek an improvement in his conditions; and the fear of dismissal from his work, and eviction from his cottage, is a powerful deterrent from action. That he has remained an agricultural labourer, when so many of his mates have migrated to the town or left the country for the Colonies, reveals a liking for rural life deeply rooted in his nature.

The trade union cannot guarantee him against the loss of livelihood should he displease his employers, and so no trade union—unless it be strictly a friendly society—can enlist him. And as the rural exodus continues and the labourers diminish from the land, the appeal of trade unionism ceases to be heard. There has been no serious return to trade unionism in rural England since Joseph Arch's crusade in 1872.

Parliament was concerned in the status and the doings of trade unions in those years of the Junta and Joseph Arch's campaign, provoked to interference in the first place by the "Sheffield outrages" in 1866. These outrages took the form of "rattening," *i.e.* the

removal of the tools of non-unionist workmen, and of exploding cans of gunpowder, and were done by members of the Saw-Grinders' Union.[1] Indignant public opinion refused to discriminate between the acts of the Sheffield grinders and the general policy of the trade unions; and to make matters worse the Lord Chief Justice decided, in the Court of Queen's Bench in 1867, that a trade union could not as a friendly society proceed against a defaulting or dishonest officer for embezzlement of funds, because it was in itself since 1825 an illegal if not an actually criminal association. A Royal Commission was at once appointed to report on trade unionism, and in 1871 a Trade Union Act and a Criminal Law Amendment Act were passed, the former legalising the existence of trade unions, the latter making, by stringent provisions, picketing, even when the "watching and besetting" was accomplished by a single individual, a serious offence.

A small band of middle-class men (of whom the chief were Mr. Frederic Harrison, Professor E. S. Beesly, Henry Crompton, and Thomas Hughes, then M.P.) stood by the trade unionists, as the "Christian Socialists" had stood by the co-operators when they were seeking legislative recognition, and gave assistance at the Royal Commission that considerably modified public opinion.

The Conservatives were returned to power at the general election in 1874; another Royal Commission was appointed (nominally to inquire into the working of "Labour Laws"), and in 1875 the Government brought in Bills, which were speedily passed, for the repeal of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, the recognition of

[1] Charles Reade's novel, *Put Yourself in his Place*, gives a clear view of hostile contemporary opinion.

employers and workmen (no longer master and servant") as parties to a civil contract, and for making legal peaceful picketing during a strike.[1]

The Trade Union Congress passed a special vote of thanks to Mr. R. A. Cross, the Home Secretary, for steering the Bill through Parliament, and George Odger declared enthusiastically that "the laws which Mr. Cross had carried through were of all the laws he ever was acquainted with the very best affecting the labouring population of this country."

This was in 1875. Ten years later George Odger and his colleagues had passed away, and a "new unionism" inspired by Socialist doctrine had arisen. Two members of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, Mr. John Burns [2] and Mr. Tom Mann,[3] were the brilliant spokesmen of the creed of militant and aggressive unionism between 1885 and 1890. Their complaint was that the trade union was too much of a friendly society and not enough of an instrument for securing better conditions for its members.

The spirit of the new unionism manifested itself in the "labour unrest" of 1888–90, when the dockers', the gasworkers', and other labourers' unions were formed. These unions, which are considered more fully elsewhere, were first and foremost for shorter hours and better wages, and for political action, and gave little attention to friendly society benefits. Their

[1] "Collective bargaining, in short, with all its necessary accompaniments, was, after fifty years of legislative struggle, finally recognised by the law of the land."—Webb, *History of Trade Unionism.*

[2] Right Hon. John Burns, M.P., President of the Local Government Board since 1906.

[3] Mr. Tom Mann is now the leading exponent of Syndicalism in England.

leaders have mostly become Members of Parliament, or, unsuccessful as parliamentary candidates, remain apostles of revolutionary Socialism. The ideal of both is the same—that the working class, through collective political action, should become the directing and governing force in the country. But parliamentary responsibility tempers revolutionary desires, and the Labour leader in the House of Commons or in the City Council finds that he has to take part in the work of legislation and administration with a number of other persons of variously different opinions, persons with little patience for ideals.

Hence it has come about the "new unionism" of the eighties, with its ardour for Independent Labour representation and the election of Socialists to Parliament, is already "old-fashioned" and "out of date" according to the still newer unionism of the twentieth century. For this unionism is Syndicalist, and the general strike is its weapon. It is as though Robert Owen had risen from the dead when the earnest talk of the Syndicalist is heard.

Meantime, the great bulk of trade unionists proceed steadily on the old lines—distrusting revolutionary sentiments, favouring the return to Parliament of their officers—of whose abilities and honesty they are aware—believing that by collective bargaining they can achieve a more comfortable life for themselves and their families, and that legislation of a social character is also needed to improve their position. They have seen in the last few years a steady stream of trade unionist officials into the permanent Civil Service of the country; they have heard the justice of many of their demands admitted by people of all ranks and parties; they cannot foresee a time when their unions will not be wanted.

The trade union, through its committees, branch meetings, general executive, and numerous offices, supplies a training-ground and a discipline for the workman that is of immense value in a democratic country. It teaches him conduct in public debate, responsibility for the expenditure of large sums of money not his own, and makes demands for a high standard of character. It also teaches him that we are mutually inter-dependent in an era of complex machinery and high civilisation, and that no man who enjoys this civilisation or uses this machinery can order his life as he will, without consideration for his neighbours.

As far as the law is concerned, trade unionists may now picket peacefully, but the unions, by the Osborne judgment, may not spend their money on political purposes, and they cannot be sued as a corporate body. The payment of Members of Parliament out of the national exchequer has not satisfied the keener politicians in the trade unions, and they are still, through their leaders, seeking legislation that will enable a reasonable majority in any union to devote such portion of its funds as it may think fit to local and parliamentary expenditure.[1]

CHAPTER III

TRADE UNION CONGRESS AND PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE

Every year the various trade unions in Great Britain elect representatives, and these meet together for a week's discussion of industrial and political questions

[1] A Trade Union Bill is now (February 1913) before Parliament (and has passed the House of Commons), to allow expenditure of trade union funds on political purposes.

affecting the working class. This meeting, held at the beginning of September, is called the Trade Union Congress; and at the Congress a Parliamentary Committee is chosen, whose business it is to explain to Cabinet Ministers and to impress upon Members of Parliament the need for specific reforms either in legislation or in administration of the law.[1]

Certain standing-orders govern the constitution and procedure of Congress. A trade union claiming representation must be a genuine trade society of unimpeachable *bona fides*, which has paid the necessary fees to Congress according to its membership: £1, 10*s.* for every 1000 members or fraction thereof. The accredited delegate must be either a person working at his or her trade or a permanent official of the union represented. The expenses of the delegate attending Congress, and the delegate's fee, 10*s.*, must in each case be paid by the society represented.

The representation and voting qualification is one delegate per 2000 members or fraction thereof, so that a society with less than 1000 members is recognised as a unit.

Voting is by card, and therefore it is not necessary for the Miners' Federation, for instance, with its 550,000 members, to send 275 delegates. Its full voting strength can be displayed if it has but one delegate, and only for

[1] The exact objects of the Trade Union Congress and the Parliamentary Committee are thus defined officially:

1. To watch all legislation affecting labour.
2. To initiate such legislation as Congress may direct.
3. To arrange programme for Congress from resolutions sent from trades.
4. To verify all delegates' credentials.
5. To arrange for the meeting of Congress.
6. To ballot for position and order of the resolutions.
7. To transact the business between each Congress.

purposes of debate do a larger number attend.[1] Speeches are strictly limited by time. Ten minutes is allowed to the mover of a resolution, seven to the seconder, and five to all succeeding speakers.

Formerly a trades council could send delegates, but as the societies affiliated to a trades council already had representation at Congress, this overlapping was abolished at Cardiff, 1895, when the rule as to the present status of delegates was settled.

The Parliamentary Committee consists of sixteen members (generally secretaries of important unions) elected by ballot at and from the Congress, not more than one member being eligible for the committee. The committee meets in London, where its offices are, and 12*s.* 6*d.* per day for country members, 10*s.* for London members, is allowed with travelling expenses from the same trade or same group of trades. The committee elects its own chairman, vice-chairman, and treasurer, but the Congress elects a secretary, whose salary is £300 a year.

The first Congress was held at Manchester, at Whitsuntide 1868, on the invitation of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council, but a General Conference of trade delegates had taken place in London the previous year. This London Conference was called by the London Working Men's Association, which had George Potter, a carpenter, for its president. (Potter was an important figure in the trade union world for many years. A critic of the Junta and its cautious methods, and the editor of a paper called the *Beehive*, a weekly organ of trade unionism from 1861 to 1877, and the only full record that exists of trade union activity in those years.) The

[1] As a matter of fact the Miners' Federation had 120 delegates at the 1912 Congress.

delegates of the numerous smaller metropolitan societies were the main body of the Conference, for George Potter and his Working Men's Association were cordially disliked by the officials of the larger unions, but from the miners came Alexander MacDonald, from the iron-workers John Kane, from Sheffield William Dronfield, as delegates. The chief business done was the drawing up of a petition to Parliament for the legal recognition of trade unions, the decision in the Queen's Bench that a trade society had no legal existence calling for some sort of immediate action on the part of the outlawed unionists. It was felt that the trade unions must put themselves right with the general public.

At Manchester, in 1868, thirty-four delegates attended, representing 118,367 members. The circular convening the Congress was signed by the president and secretary of the local Trades Council, and in the spirit of the London Conference urged that "prompt and decisive action be taken by the working classes themselves." The order of proceeding was also stated in the circular:

"The Congress will assume the character of the annual meeting of the Social Science Association, in the transactions of which society the artizan class is most excluded; and papers will be laid before the Congress on the various subjects which at the present time affect the trade societies, each paper to be followed by discussion on the points advanced, with a view of the merits and demerits of each question being thoroughly ventilated through the medium of the public press."

A lengthy list of subjects for discussion was proposed ·

1. Trade unions an absolute necessity.
2. Trade unions and political economy.

3. The effect of trade unions on foreign competition.
4. Regulation of the hours of labour.
5. Limitation of apprentices.
6. Technical education.
7. Courts of arbitration and conciliation.
8. Co-operation.
9. The present inequality of the law in regard to conspiracy, intimidation, picketing, &c.
10. Factory Acts Extension Bill, 1867; the necessity of compulsory inspection and its application to all places where women and children are employed.
11. The present Royal Commission on trade unions —how far worthy of the confidence of the trade union interests.
12. Legalisation of trade societies.
13. Necessity of an annual Congress.

Several of the items in this comprehensive programme were to come up for discussion over and over again in the next forty years, but no papers were read upon them in 1868. The first authorised report of the proceedings of Congress was not issued till 1873, and little seems to have been done at Manchester [1] beyond consolidating some of the trade unions for common defensive political action, advertising to all England the reason for these combinations, and clearing up popular misconceptions as to their aims and rules.

Alexander MacDonald, Kane, Dronfield, and George Potter were amongst the delegates, and it was decided that the Trade Union Congress should become an annual parliament of trade unionists.

[1] "It was a preliminary Congress, and in the main confined its consideration to future action, laying its foundations, and deciding its policy."—W. J. Davis, *History and Recollections.*

The second Congress, held at Birmingham in 1869, marked a distinct advance upon the first. Forty-seven delegates, including George Odger, George Howell, W. R. Cremer, and Mr. (now Right Hon.) Thomas Burt, M.P., attended, representing 250,000 members. Many topics, including a paper on "The best means to secure the direct representation of labour in the House of Commons," were discussed, and a Parliamentary Committee appointed.

Then the cautious minds of the Junta decided to support the Congress, and although no meeting took place in 1870, the third Congress, held in London, 1871, was memorable for its inclusion of all the trade union leaders —brought together by the anti-picketing clauses of the Government Bill in Parliament. After the London meeting the Parliamentary Committee took the place of the Committee of Amalgamated Societies, the Junta dissolved, and the Trade Union Congress became the chosen instrument for expressing the political and social faith of the organised workmen in this country.

To be more exact, let us say for expressing the well-considered opinions of the official leaders of trade unions. For with the trade union, as with every ordinary club, league, or other human society in England, the bulk of the members of the rank and file are content to leave the management and direction of their society to its elected officers. Given the power to appoint, retain, and dismiss the officials, and freely to criticise, when displeased, their policy, the average trade unionist pays his contribution and has little desire and less ambition for active participation in the business of the union, granting cheerfully to others the right to speak and act in his name. If this is true to-day, when only on the most vital trade union issues can anything like a full poll of members be

obtained, it was far more obviously the case forty years ago.

Hence, when the leaders of the trade union movement were men such as the Junta and their immediate successors were—men strong in the belief that workmen's combinations, given full liberty of action, could achieve the social salvation of the working class without State interference—the Congress reflected these opinions; and the chief resolutions passed either called for alterations in the laws affecting the status of trade unions, or expressed a desire for political reforms commonly included in the current Liberal and Radical programme.

Since 1890 the active spirits and many of the leading officials of the trade unions have been Socialists rather than Liberals, and so the character of Congress resolutions has changed accordingly, the older school yielding to the younger men. To-day the revolutionary innovators of twenty years ago are themselves in many cases regarded as "old fogeys," to be voted down if possible by Syndicalists. And all these forty years, while Congress has been declaring its faith to the world in various resolutions, the average trade unionist has gone his own way in untroubled indifference, feeling no call to endorse the political and economic opinions set forth at the annual parliament of his fellows, and remaining Liberal, Conservative, or Socialist according to his taste and fancy. If to-day the trade unions appear socialistic in their doctrine, it is partly because their leaders are inclined to Socialism, but much more because the old individualism of the nineteenth century, with its dogmas of free competition and anti-State interference, no longer has any considerable number of advocates; and trade unionists are merely with ordinary Liberals and Conservatives in seeking social betterment

by legislation and by extended Government powers over numerous departments of human life. On one point the Trade Union Congress cleaves to its old tradition: it will have none of compulsory arbitration by the State for the prevention or settlement of strikes. New Zealand has adopted compulsory arbitration, and Mr. Ben Tillett has long and vainly urged at Congress that Great Britain would profit by a similar proceeding—trade unionist leaders generally still hold that working-class organisations should be free to strike when occasions demand, testing their strength and endurance against the might of employers. Not that strikes are desirable in the eyes of trade unionist leaders. They are extremely undesirable; for a serious strike, involving thousands of men, entails heavy labour and anxiety on the officers of the union whose members have ceased to work. More than once the worry, the exceptional responsibility, and the overwork caused by a strike have destroyed the life and health of a trade union official. And an unsuccessful strike always means the dissatisfaction and ill-will of the defeated trade unionists directed against their leaders—though the latter may have done their best to dissuade from any stoppage of work.

The Trade Union Congress has no authority to enforce its resolutions on the unions, and a resolution is often passed as a pious opinion only to be ignored in the workaday world. The abolition of children's half-time labour in the factories has been condemned over and over again by the assembled delegates in the Trade Union Congress, but numbers of Lancashire trade unionists have steadily resisted, and do still resist, the abolition of this labour.

The legal eight hours' day for miners was opposed

by a majority of miners in Northumberland and Durham for many years after Congress had declared in its favour, and Mr. Charles Fenwick, the M.P. of these opposing Durham miners, was actually elected secretary to the Parliamentary Committee of the Congress in 1870 and re-elected for the next four years by the very delegates who voted for the eight hours' day.

A resolution in favour of complete Socialism was carried as far back as 1894 at the Trade Union Congress, but that did not prevent the delegates from electing as parliamentary secretary for ten years (1894–1904) S. Woods of the Miners' Federation, a sturdy old-fashioned Radical. The present secretary, Mr. C. W. Bowerman, M.P., had made no profession of Socialist views, but is not on that account regarded unfavourably by the delegates who would vote for a socialistic resolution.

If the question be asked, of what use is this Trade Union Congress which is without authority to compel obedience to its decrees, this annual parliament of labour whom no one need obey ? several replies may be given :

(1) The very discussions at Congress are a relief to members of trade unions with grievances on their minds and with visions of human progress within their souls.

(2) A better understanding is promoted between the various unions and their officers by the interchange of opinions and the social intercourse during Congress week.

(3) The Parliamentary Committee can lay requests before Cabinet Ministers and "lobby" Members of Parliament with the assurance that a large body of the electorate is at their back.

(4) From the discussions and resolutions of the Congress both the Labour party and the General Federation of Trade Unions have come into being.

(5) Congress and the Parliamentary Committee have been a training-ground for many Members of Parliament and permanent officials in Government service. A seat on the Parliamentary Committee is a high honour in the eyes of enthusiastic trade unionists.

The Right Hon. Thomas Burt, M.P., was president of Congress in 1891. The Right Hon. John Burns, M.P., was chairman of the Parliamentary Committee in 1893. Mr. W. Thorne, M.P., was chairman of the Parliamentary Committee in 1896, and again in 1911, and was president of Congress in 1912. Mr. J. O'Grady, M.P., was president in 1898; Mr. C. W. Bowerman, M.P., in 1901. Mr. John Burnet (A.S.E.) served for a long period on the Parliamentary Committee before his appointment as first labour correspondent of the Board of Trade. Mr. C. J. Drummond (London Society of Compositors) was also on the Parliamentary Committee before his appointment to the Board of Trade. Mr. Richard Bell (Railway Servants), and Mr. D. C. Cummings (Boilermakers), both in the Board of Trade, are past presidents of Congress and were chairmen of the Parliamentary Committee in 1903 and 1905 respectively. Mr. D. J. Shackleton (Weavers), who now holds an important Government position under the Insurance Act, was chairman of the Parliamentary Committee (1907–8) and president of Congress (1908–9).

Formerly the president of Congress was a local trade union celebrity in the town where Congress met, but twelve years ago a rule was made that the chairman of the Parliamentary Committee should be the president of the next Congress.

Although the number of trade unions represented at Congress is reliable evidence as to the strength of trade union membership in the country, it is not a complete

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return; for some societies generally decline to send delegates, and the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, with its 138,947 members, has not for several years been represented. In 1910 the total number of trade union members represented at Congress was 1,647,715, while the actual membership in the United Kingdom was, according to the Board of Trade, 2,435,704.

On the whole, however, the steady increase of membership at Congress shows very fairly the progress made. From 118,367 at Manchester in 1868, the figures have gone up to 2,001,633 at Newport in 1912. There has not been unbroken advance, for the years and seasons of bad trade and unemployment always bring a falling-off in trade union membership, but this falling-off is more than exceeded at the next revival of business.

CHAPTER IV

TRADE UNION FEDERATION

Trade union federations in Great Britain are of two kinds. They are either a federation of unions in the same or kindred trade, or a general federation, irrespective of the particular employment.

The Miners' Federation of Great Britain—with its membership fluctuating between 500,000 and 600,000—is the strongest example of the former.

The General Federation of Trade Unions—with 135 affiliated societies and 711,994 members at the close of 1911—is the only recognised general federation now in existence.

In both cases federation clearly to be distinguished from amalgamation was long in coming, sectional in-

terests blocking the way to unity over and over again. In 1874, for instance, after the Sheffield Trade Union Congress, an attempt was made to establish a "Federation of Organised Trade Societies," but nothing came of it. The Boilermakers and Amalgamated Society of Engineers strove the following year to federate kindred trade societies for mutual defence, and their efforts were frustrated by disputes between the various societies. No better fortune attended a similar attempt on the part of the Boilermakers in 1881; and it was not till 1889 that Robert Knight, the general secretary of the Boilermakers' Society, succeeded in establishing the Federation of Engineering and Shipbuilding Trades of the United Kingdom, which now includes twenty-six unions, with a total membership of 372,186. This federation chiefly exists to arbitrate between affiliated unions and employers and between unions disputing as to the demarcation of work.

At the Edinburgh Congress, 1879, the cry was raised for federation, but when the Parliamentary Committee drafted rules and issued an appeal to the trade unions throughout the country to consider plans for a federation of organised trade societies the request was completely ignored. In 1882, when the subject was again before Congress, Thomas Ashton, one of the chief leaders of the cotton operatives, declared bluntly that it was all nonsense to pass a resolution in favour of federation, and that "it was impossible for the trades of the country to amalgamate, their interests were so varied, and they were so jealous with regard to each other's disputes."

But the growth of employers' federations, the presence of vast combinations of capital, and the spectacle of the trust, have taught trade unionists that they too must

combine far more closely if wages are to be maintained or improved conditions of labour secured.

In 1888 the Miners' Federation of Great Britain was formed, and twenty local independent miners' unions (including the Yorkshire Miners' Association with 58,000 members, and the Lancashire Miners' Federation with 43,000 members, and numbering altogether some 200,000 working miners) linked up in a new and strongly built alliance. For a long time the coal-fields of South Wales, Durham, and Northumberland were outside the federation, the miners in those places preferring the complete independence of their local unions. They are all within the federation now, and throughout Great Britain the miners present a compact body of men. Although each county association is self-governing, when a ballot has been taken of the whole federation—as it must be taken in the event of a general coal strike or lock-out—the minority loyally abides by the decision of the majority. As the miners were the first trade unionists to elect Labour members to Parliament, so to-day there are far more miners in the House of Commons than there are representatives of other trade unions. Northumberland, Durham, Yorkshire, Lancashire, Fifeshire, Staffordshire, Derby, Nottingham, Warwick, and South Wales all send miners' representatives to Parliament, and in each case they are men who have worked at the pits. A penny per member per quarter is the sum paid by the various miners' associations to the federation, and 7*s.* 6*d.* per week per member is paid out by the federation when a strike or lock-out takes place.

In addition to the Miners' Federation and the Engineering and Shipbuilding Federation—by far the largest of the sectional federations—we may note the British Metal

Trades Federation (established 1906, and now embracing twenty-three unions with a total membership (1910) of 204,331), which aims at the prevention of overlapping, the institution of greater uniformity and co-operation, the interchange of information, the fostering of international relations, &c., and makes no benefit payments; and the federations of the cotton and textile trades. The Amalgamated Weavers' Association (established 1884), with its membership of 112,462 persons, is a benefit-paying federation, and is also the principal member of the Northern Counties Textile Trades Federation, an advisory and organising body established in 1905. The United Textile Factory Workers' Association, 1883, includes the federations of weavers, spinners, cardroom workers, and three smaller federations and unions in the cotton trade, and has for its object "the removal of any grievance from which its members may be suffering, for which parliamentary or governmental interference is required."

Twenty of the more important trade unions in the letterpress printing, lithographic printing, and bookbinding trades are affiliated to the Printing and Kindred Trades Federation, which was established in 1891, and had a total membership in 1910 of 68,476. Besides these large and national federations in a great many places, small local federations exist, especially for the building and cotton trades. The local trades council, too, has something of the nature of a federation, though it is without powers to enforce any decision, and can do little but pass resolutions, organise trade unionists for parliamentary and municipal elections, and assist by voluntary collections of money during a strike or lock-out. About 1,000,000 members of trade unions are represented at 252 trades councils in Great Britain.

The Transport Workers' Federation came into existence in 1911, at the instigation of the Dockers' Union, and for the purpose of increasing wages at the Port of London. It included the unions of dockers, carmen, stevedores, gasworkers, and general labourers, and sailors and firemen, and is essentially a militant organisation. As to the total membership of the Transport Workers' Federation, it would be difficult to give even an approximate figure, for its component unions fluctuate enormously, gathering in thousands of members when a strike threatens, and losing thousands when the dispute is over and the battle has been lost or won.

The General Federation of Trade Unions was formed at Manchester in January 1899, and is the fruit of persistent action at the Trade Union Congress. Mr. W. A. Appleton, the secretary of the federation, has explained to his fellow trade unionists why it was formed:

"The dominant idea of the founders was a strong central organisation, gathering to itself all the scattered forces of the movement; unifying these, welding them into a well-ordered and definite army, capable of concerted movement, and backed by a gigantic central fund, the whole of which should be at the service of any society fighting to maintain its existence, or to improve the lot of its members."

That the federation has not entirely satisfied the hopes of its founders Mr. Appleton freely admits. He further suggests the cause of the shortcoming:

"This ideal has not been altogether realised; the old selfishness and jealousies are not quite dead. There is still the tendency in some directions to regard the federation as an institution into which you must pay the minimum contribution and from which you must extract the maximum benefit; while the stupid fear

that the federation may become stronger in money and influence than the individual organisations who are affiliated to it, still affects some persons.

"There are still many unions outside the federation who indirectly benefit by its work and influence. Some of these stand outside for exactly the same reason as the non-unionists give for refusing to join the union, viz. that they cannot see an immediate opportunity of getting out twice as much as they pay in. A number fail to affiliate because they would rather risk annihilation than any suggestion of central direction, while a few remain out because their conceit leads them to assume that they are in all things sufficient unto themselves, or because their snobbishness prevents them associating with their fellow-workers."

The huge consolidations of capital make trade union federation a necessity, according to the last annual report of the General Federation :

"The necessity for more thoughtful and co-ordinated trade union effort cannot be too strongly insisted upon. The organisation of the employers' associations is much more complete and effective than it was twenty or thirty years ago ; they mostly possess highly skilled technical advisers, and it is easier for them to act quickly because of their smaller numbers and because sentiment has little or no place in their calculations. Labour is just one of the commodities they must buy, and they pay for labour the price which labour, by reason of its supply in relation to their demand, or by reason of its capacity for collective bargaining, can exact. To the employer every industrial proposition must represent a profit and loss transaction to be regarded purely from a business point of view, and it is natural for him to insist that the profit is as large as possible, and that the

greater portion of it come to his side of the account. It is up to workmen to see that a fair share of this profit is translated into wages; their only chance of doing this is to put their own trade unions into a position more nearly equal to that now occupied by the federated associations of employers. Amalgamation and federation must, therefore, continue until there is a scientifically organised trade union movement, capable of throwing its strength in any needed direction, and using the whole of its resources in the defence or promotion of the industrial rights and privileges of its members."

The same feeling towards the concentration of capital has created federations of trade unions in America and on the Continent, and an International Federation of National Federations: with the result that financial assistance is often forthcoming from the unions in other countries when a strike of exceptional gravity takes place, while steps are taken to prevent foreign workmen imported by employers from taking the place of the strikers.

The General Federation does not interfere in politics "except when legislation threatens the interests of trade unions, and then only through the Parliamentary Committee or the Labour party, with whom it acts harmoniously upon all labour questions." It confines itself "to what it believes to be purely trade union work."

Societies affiliated to the General Federation pay, on the higher scale, 4*d.* per quarter per member, and receive 5*s.* per week for every member involved in a dispute, whether strike or lock-out, approved by the federation; or on the lower scale, 2*d.* per quarter per member, with 2*s.* 6*d.* per week for strike pay. In 1910–11 the federation paid out £72,322 to affiliated societies; its

receipts for the year amounted to £31,974, and its total funds in hand at the end of the year stood at £61,235.

While the General Federation with its 710,996 members is supported by the cotton operators and textile workers (but not by the miners, who are content with their own federation of 500,000 members), and by the chief unions of the boilermakers, boot and shoe operatives, engineers, general labourers, ironfounders, painters and decorators, shipwrights, and tailors, and includes a hundred smaller societies, there still remain some 1,168,727 trade unionists not identified with the national movements. Of these, the secretary of the General Federation declares in his annual report: "Their abstention is a source of weakness. By standing outside they prejudice themselves and prejudice the rest of the movement. Most of them tell you they believe in the principle of federation, but they are not prepared to make any sacrifice for principle."

The "immediate ideal" of the General Federation, according to its secretary, is "a million members and a million pounds reserve."

CHAPTER V

TRADE UNIONS AND POLITICAL ACTION

Labour Representation, Socialism, Syndicalism

WHILE it may be said that the majority of members in all the British trade unions joined for the sake of the direct financial benefits in the event of sickness or unemployment, or in the hope of gaining some advantage in hours or wages, it is equally true that a minority, politically minded and alert, has ever sought to obtain

improved conditions by parliamentary legislation. And since this minority has included the responsible leaders and officers of the unions it has constrained the rank and file to support political action.

It is no new thing the concerted political action of trade unionists. It sprang from the belief of the more intelligent of the working class at the beginning of the nineteenth century that parliamentary representation through enfranchisement would bring better conditions of life to the labourer and artizan. Trade unionists in this belief were conspicuous supporters of the Chartist movement, and after the enfranchisement of the town workman by the Act of 1867, their leaders turned hopefully to the task of winning seats in the House of Commons. At the Trade Union Congress of 1869 industrial constituencies were advised to adopt as Labour candidates men who were either working at a trade or were the paid officers of trade unions. And in 1874 trade unionist Labour candidates went to the poll as third candidates in ten constituencies, while Alexander MacDonald and Mr. T. Burt were returned by the miners (without opposition from the Liberals) for Stafford and Morpeth respectively. In 1885 ten trade unionist M.P.s were returned, and from that time forward the number of trade unionist representatives in Parliament has slowly but steadily increased, the members of the Miners' Federation alone now taking eighteen seats in the House of Commons.

The older trade unionist leaders grew up in the Liberalism that was current in England in the middle of the nineteenth century, and the Liberal tradition still holds more than half the Labour members in the House of Commons. Never has a Conservative trade unionist been returned to Parliament, and it is only in Lancashire

(where the opposition of the Manchester school of Liberals to the Factory Acts drove the bulk of the cotton operatives to support Conservatives) that a trade unionist leader has even stood as a Conservative trade unionist candidate for Parliament: the late James Mawdsley, for many years secretary of the cotton-spinners, contesting Oldham, unsuccessfully, in that capacity in 1900.

Reared in the chapels of the Primitive Methodists and Wesleyans, learning by long practice as local preachers and temperance advocates to become acceptable and proficient public speakers, the trade unionist M.P.s naturally are attached to the Liberal party. Those not professing the Nonconformist faith—the studious men who came under the influence of Herbert Spencer and Huxley, the Positivists—or Bradlaugh—were also Liberals. The Church of England trade unionist leader, if not absolutely unknown, is rarely found, and has not been seen at any time in the House of Commons. Only in recent years in England has the Roman Catholic trade unionist been so numerous that trade union officials, and Labour M.P.s of the Roman Catholic faith, have been elected. These, too, are averse from Conservatism since, being Irish Nationalists, they desire Home Rule.

The Liberalism of the older trade union leaders was a mental attitude. Trade unionists were quite aware that what is called "labour legislation," that is, factory acts and other measures for ending the worst abuses of the modern industrial system, were not the work of Liberals more than Conservatives, but had been placed on the statute-book by the joint action of men on both sides. That both political parties looked upon a third party with profound dislike was also apparent. The

records of Liberal and Conservative Governments evidenced equally definite objection to trade union action in general. If Lord Shaftesbury, a Conservative, was the lifelong and entirely disinterested advocate of factory acts, he regarded trade unions with no friendly eye. While John Bright, who approved of trade unions, objected to factory acts and to trade unionist (or as he called it "class") representation in Parliament.

But none of these things could turn the trade unionist leader from his general allegiance to the Liberal party. There might be, as there was in 1874, a temporary displeasure with the Liberal Government for its anti-trade union laws, and a momentary glow of appreciation for the Conservative Government in 1875, when it passed the "Employers' and Workmen Act," and repealed the objectionable Criminal Law Amendment Act of its predecessors; these things were not to cause any lasting breach. As it was, when a vote of thanks was given at the Trade Union Congress of 1875 to Mr. R. A. Cross, the Conservative Home Secretary, for the passage of the Bill through Parliament, there was some opposition, and only on the assurance of such uncompromising Radicals as George Howell, Henry Broadhurst, and George Odger that no vote of thanks was intended for the Conservative party, and that it was to Mr. Cross personally they were expressing their indebtedness, was the vote carried with but three or four dissentients.

Nonconformity, free thought in religion, a rooted belief in political democracy, an individualism that regarded State interference as a necessary evil, and a sympathy with nationalism on the Continent (without any very clear view as to what the nationalists and revolutionaries were contending for), explain the adherence of the old trade union leaders to the Liberal

party. And all the beneficent legislation of Conservative Governments could not shake that belief. Apart from the cotton operatives, the trade unionist leaders of forty years ago were more anxious for freedom of action for their unions than for social legislation, believing that by collective bargaining and the strike they could achieve the fair wage for the fair day's work, which was all they supposed the workman was entitled to. They desired to sit in Parliament because, in the words of Mr. George Shipton, " no other class can speak with such authority on labour questions," but were innocent of any vision of working-class predominance or a separate working class in Parliament. Such legislation as the early Labour leaders sought was rather of a politically democratic than a social character. The admission of workmen to juries and to town councils by an amendment of the qualification, reform of the patent laws, and of the magistracy, were demanded by the Trade Union Congress regularly every year in the seventies and eighties of the nineteenth century, and the chief industrial demands were for employers' liability, an increased factory inspectorate, and technical measures for the prevention of accidents. In 1886 legislation for national insurance was condemned by Congress as contrary to the interests of trade unions.

In matters of political opinion the leaders of the movement must not be taken as representing the rank and file of the trade unions. Politics and religion were outside the business of the ordinary trade union lodge, and the doings of the annual Congress have never been of real concern to the majority of trade unionists. Generally, where the trade union paid for a representative in Parliament, or subscribed to his election expenses, it was satisfied that he would be a useful man

in the House of Commons; and those who might not care for the Liberalism of their official leader recognised and respected his knowledge of technical points of law and his whole-hearted championship of the trade union cause.

Still, with every admission that the incursions into politics of the public-spirited trade union leaders were sanctioned passively by their followers, the policy of parliamentary representation was challenged more than once at the Trade Union Congress by delegates who would keep the unions from the strife of party politics. In 1882, at the Congress, only by 63 to 43 votes was the following resolution carried:

"That, in the opinion of this Congress, a larger measure of direct representation of labour in Parliament is desirable in the interests of the working classes, and that the time has arrived when this question should pass from the region of abstract discussion to the domain of practical labour politics; and for the support of such representatives when in Parliament by the State."

Four years later the Trade Union Congress established the Labour Electoral Association for the purpose of obtaining more labour representatives in Parliament, and increased representation on local governing bodies.

Trade unions and trades councils were to pay 5*s.* a year, and individual subscribers 1*s.* a year.

The trouble with the Labour Electoral Association was that its officers, though earnest trade unionists, were all Liberals, and Socialism was becoming the political and economic faith of the younger men in the trade union world. Mr. John Wilson, M.P. (Durham Miners), and Mr. W. Abraham, M.P., "Mabon" (South Wales Miners) filled the posts of chairman and vice-chairman respectively of the first committee of the

L.E.A. in 1886, and Mr. Wilson declared emphatically at Congress the following year that he advocated the formation of a Labour party that should be separate from the Liberal and Conservative parties. The Labour Electoral Association, however, never won the confidence of the trade unions, and though it helped to secure the return of a few trade unionists to municipal councils it could not create a separate Labour party.

Mr. J. Keir Hardie, now M.P., who came to the Trade Union Congress for the first time in 1887 as a delegate of the Ayrshire miners (and at once became a prominent member by fiercely attacking Henry Broadhurst, M.P., then secretary of the Parliamentary Committee and the typical leader of the old school), was more than any other trade unionist the real creator of a separate Labour party. The Independent Labour party, known familiarly as the I.L.P., came into existence as a national organisation in 1892, not as the direct offspring of the Trade Union Congress, but by the fusion of a number of already existing local labour representation parties. Its membership was never confined to trade unionists, but was open to all who accepted Socialism and were not members of Liberal or Conservative parties. With the exception of Mr. John Burns and Mr. W. Thorne, M.P., the younger trade union leaders at the close of the nineteenth century who believed in Socialism were generally members of the I.L.P. In addition to Mr. Keir Hardie, Mr. G. N. Barnes, M.P., then general secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers; Mr. J. R. Clynes, M.P., and the late Pete Curran, organisers of the Gasworkers' Union; Mr. D. Cummings, then general secretary of the Boilermakers, and now an official at the Board of Trade; Mr. I. Mitchell, A.S.E., and late secretary of the General

Federation of Trade Unions, now at the Board of Trade; Mr. Tom Mann, A.S.E.; Mr. Ben Tillett, general secretary of the Dockers' Union; Mr. R. Smillie, now president of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain; and Mr. J. Sexton, secretary of the Liverpool Dockers, were amongst the active supporters of the Independent Labour party in the days when Socialism to most people in England was still suspect as a dangerous novelty.

The I.L.P. still exists, but it is now but an affiliated society to the Labour party. For the trade unions, at their Congress in 1899, again took up the business of direct labour representation, and this time successfully; with the result that in 1900 the national Labour Representation Committee came into existence.

The Labour Representation Committee was at first a political federation of trade unions, trades councils, Socialist societies, and local labour associations, and it very quickly had four members in the House of Commons: Mr. J. Keir Hardie, Mr. W. Crooks, Mr. D. J. Shackleton, and Mr. A. Henderson. In 1906 it returned thirty Members of Parliament, and subsequently changed its name to the Labour party. Then trades councils were excluded from membership, on the same ground that they were excluded from the Trade Union Congress, and the only Socialist societies affiliated were the I.L.P. and the Fabian Society. In 1910 the Miners' Federation, which had hitherto held aloof, preferring to send its own members to Parliament unpledged to separate action, formally joined the Labour party, and the House of Commons membership went up to forty. Mr. J. Ramsay MacDonald, M.P.—not himself a trade unionist, but a representative of the I.L.P.—was the secretary of the party from its formation in 1900 till 1911, when he became the chairman of the parliamentary party.

Although a separate political organisation, in sympathy with Socialist proposals, the Labour party still adheres to the traditional allegiance to Liberalism, retaining the belief in free trade and nationalism, and on that account supporting the present Government in its Irish and Welsh legislation, and opposing the Conservative programme of tariff reform. The entrance of the Miners' Federation, whose parliamentary representatives hitherto have been in most cases earnest Nonconformists, strengthened the Labour party's friendly, though unofficial, alliance with the present Government; and the fact that in many constituencies the Labour member meets with no opposition from Liberals also helps to maintain the existing mutual good feeling.

The Socialism that alarmed and terrified so many people twenty years ago is now no longer a bugbear; for the individualism of the Victorian economists and Manchester Liberals has passed away, and to-day men and women of all parties and creeds, inspired by social sympathies, are ready and anxious to experiment in collectivist enterprises, and to extend the authority of the State for the promotion of public health, better housing, and the removal of destitution. The trade unionist leaders of the present day are as naturally under the influence of Socialist thought as their predecessors were under the influence of the individualist *laissez-faire* philosophy of the nineteenth century.

The constitution of the Labour party required that every affiliated society should pay one penny per member per annum, the Labour party in return pay one quarter of the returning-officer's expenses, and £200 a year for every member in Parliament. But the larger trade unions made their own levies for parliamentary candidates—as the miners had done for years—and the

Amalgamated Society of Engineers, the Textile Workers, the Railway Servants, the Gasworkers and General Labourers, the Compositors, and the Shop Assistants were all conspicuous in this respect at the general election of 1906. A majority in each society voted the levy and chose the candidates for Parliament; not a majority of the total membership, but a majority of those who took the trouble to ballot on the question. The average trade unionist, as before, was content to leave things in the hands of those who were active politicians. Then a minority, which disliked the idea of Socialism and the political independence of the working class, took action, objecting to the compulsory payment of a levy for purely political purposes. Mr. Osborne, a member of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, brought the matter into the Law Courts, and judgment (the now historic Osborne judgment) was given, declaring that no trade union could lawfully compel its members to pay money for labour representation or for purposes other than those of a non-political character. The judgment was upheld in the highest court in the realm, notwithstanding that many trade unions made labour representation one of the objects set out in their registered rules and constitutions. Mr. Osborne's example was followed in other societies, and the political movement of the unions received a distinct check. Not only were parliamentary levies forbidden, but henceforth unions were excluded from financing their own members for municipal elections, and it was doubtful whether fees paid to local trades councils and to the Trade Union Congress were legal.

A voluntary levy was, of course, perfectly lawful. But then voluntary levies are uncertain in their results, and trade unionists, like other people, willing enough to pay if they must for objects they approve of, are

quite happy to escape payment if they can. (What proportion of public-spirited householders would be up to time with their payments for rates and taxes if such payments were strictly voluntary and could not be enforced by law ?)

The decision of the House of Commons to pay Members of Parliament £400 a year has only partially relieved the situation, and a Trade Unions Bill is now [1] before Parliament, which may without absolutely overriding the Osborne judgment do something to restore to the unions the powers they formerly exercised in political matters.

Opposition to parliamentary action has not, however, come only from Mr. Osborne ; in the last two years a minority in certain unions has revolted against the parliamentary Labour party for its slowness and its lack of militant spirit. It would have its Labour M.P.s ; make " scenes " in the House of Commons, quite forgetting that the bulk of the electorate—the public generally—dislike and disapprove of such " scenes," and that trade unionist leaders are men of orderly habits and disciplined life, who would not be in Parliament at all but for their training in business experience and sense of responsibility. The Labour members, since Mr. Burt's arrival in 1874, have always been amongst the best behaved in the House of Commons, and by their exemplary conduct they have won the respect of the rest of the House. When a " scene " is made by a Labour member the offender is never a trade union leader, and his constituents always express their displeasure at the proceeding by rejecting him at the next election.

So it is in vain that the Labour party is reproached for its " tameness " and orderly conduct.

Another minority in the trade unions, and these are

[1] February 1913.

the men called Syndicalists, have no belief in parliamentary action at all, and openly declare that unions waste their time and money over parliamentary candidatures. To the Syndicalist the future of society is in the development of trade unions and trades councils and the superseding of the State. Hence Socialism, implying the transf rence of the natural sources of wealth to the nation, and the control and management of industry to its accredited officers—the process to be accomplished by parliamentary enactment—is a clumsy and out-of-date scheme in the Syndicalist view, improbable and undesirable.

At present Syndicalism has few supporters in the British trade unions, despite the fervent preaching of its chief advocate in this country, Mr. Tom Mann, A.S.E. But there is a growing opinion in the unions that State interference has not been always wisely devised of late, and the result is an inevitable reaction against the State as employer.

Trade union Syndicalists are the latest critics of the Labour party, and time has yet to show whether their criticism can permanently divert trade unions from politics or persuade trade unionists to be of one mind in political and economic doctrine.

CHAPTER VI

"NEW" UNIONISM

THE trade unions of dockers, gasworkers, seamen and firemen, and general labourers, sent delegates to represent 342,424 members at the Trade Union Congress of 1912, and these trade unions have all come into existence in the last five-and-twenty years.

To be quite exact, it was in July 1887 the Dockers' Union—now the Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Labourers' Union, but called at first the "Sea Coopers' and General Labourers' Association"—was born. Mr. Ben Tillett, then working as a sea cooper at the "monument" warehouse hard by London Bridge, was the agitator and organiser of the revolt which produced the union, and from the beginning he has been the secretary of the Dockers.

The aim of the "Sea Coopers," and of other labour unions which came into existence in the course of the next few years, was an immediate improvement in the conditions of labour: a living wage, less irregular employment, a shorter working day. But the leaders of this "new unionism," for thus it was called in contra-distinction to the old-established trade unionism of the skilled workmen, were stirred by the Socialist teaching of their day, and had faith that revolutionary changes in society were about to take place. Beyond the immediate gain in wages they strove for the uplifting of the whole working class, and had a vision of misery and destitution ended and a brotherhood of man set up on earth in place of the hard competitive struggle for the right to live. Hence the "new unionism" was not concerned with friendly society benefits, but was political, seeking to place labouring men of the new social faith in the seats of legislators and administrators.

The powers of the House of Commons, Town and County Councils, and Boards of Guardians, were all to be in the hands of the new trade unionists, and the world would be changed. So it seemed to Mr. Ben Tillett, Mr. Tom Mann, Mr. John Burns, Mr. W. Thorne, and their comrades five-and-twenty years ago. And if our present-day Syndicalists recall the teaching of Robert Owen, no less true is it that the new unionists with their

Socialism seemed, in their day, to announce the speedy coming of a new moral world as Robert Owen had done fifty years before.

The object of the "Sea Coopers' and General Labourers' Association" (set out in the "Dockers' Bitter Cry," July 1887) was: "The regulation of the hours of labour and the reform of the present system of contract and sub-contract, which manufactures a class of men and profits by them, who are glad enough of an hour's work to pay for a 'fo'p'ny doss.' To bring about the employment of the men on a system of greater regularity and better pay, we are hoping to effect our purpose by legitimate combination, believing that such a course will be more conducive to *permanent* good than an elaborate soup-kitchen scheme."

For two years the work of rousing the London dockers went on, and then came the famous Dock Strike of 1889. Mr. Ben Tillett, "twenty-seven and a fanatic; mad with determination in the face of odds, and the odds the very class one gave vitality and courage so gladly to," was to most people leading the forlornest of forlorn hopes in the two years preceding the strike. The title of the union did not appeal to the average docker, and it was hard uphill work. "We assailed the Victoria Docks, going to the Albert; then back to the Indian group called the east, west, south-west, and south docks; then back into the London and the St. Katharine's Docks. Morning meetings, talks, tramps, hunger, expostulation, coaxing, entreaty, curses, all of those appeals were made amid the shouts and the curses of those whom the more brutal sub-contractors had bribed to 'boo' and shout against me." [1]

The corner of Beckton Road, Canning Town; East India Dock gate, tidal basin; the south dock entrance,

[1] Tillett, *Brief History of the Dockers' Union.*

Millwall; the entrance to the Surrey commercial docks, Mill Pond Bridge, were all centres of the agitation. Growth for the union was slow. "We garnered a few members at each place, only to overstay our welcome; but we struck new ground. It was hunger for us; but it was starvation for others; and so we kept the flag flying, stuck to the broken mast of our little union ship.

"We had wool strikes: we got extra time for meals, extra money for the work, but the men drifted out of organisation from the moment they received advantage." [1]

The "Call on" at the docks was a horrible feature of the casual employment: "the last remnants of strength exerted in an effort to get work for an hour, a half hour, for a few pence. Such strugglings, shoutings, cursings, with a grinning brute selecting the chosen of the poor wretches.

"At 'The Cage,' so termed because of the stout iron bars made to protect the 'Caller on,' men ravening for food fought like madmen for the ticket, a veritable talisman of life.

"Coats, flesh, and even ears were torn off each other; men were crushed to death in the struggle, helpless if fallen. The strong literally threw themselves over the heads of their fellows, and battled with kick and curse through the kicking, punching, cursing crowds to the rails of the cage, which held them like rats—mad, human rats who saw food in the ticket.

"Calls at any period of the day or night kept men for a week at a time hungry and expectant for the food and the work which never came. Night and day watches, the scraping of refuse heaps, the furtive miserly storing of refuse rice the coolies had thrown away, to keep body and soul together.

"Men would risk life for the boss who carried a ticket

[1] Tillett, *Brief History of the Dockers' Union.*

of employment; no abasement was too abject, and so the petty tyrants flourished on a system promoting starvation and death." [1]

This was the "Call on," and to substitute some better arrangement was the purpose of the Dockers' Union.

In August 1889 came the London Dock Strike, when the men, in sheer despair, were roused to action. In a few weeks the battle was won. The dock management recognised the minimum of 6*d.* an hour—the "dockers' tanner"—regular calls for the man, and other details of reform asked for. The gain in wages touched not only the labourers, but every class of workmen at the London Docks. "Some of the men along the river front, who had been working for a paltry 18*s.* and 20*s.* per week, became the proud possessors of 40*s.* and 50*s.*, and wages went up by leaps and bounds." A spirit of independence was infused, and was recognised by the management. "The whole tone and conduct of work, of management of the men, was altered and for the best. From a condition of the foulest blackguardism in directing the work, the men found a greater respect shown them; they, too, grew in self-respect, and the men we saw after the strike were comparable to the most self-respecting of the other grades of labour.

"The calls worked out satisfactorily; organisation took the place of the haphazard; the bosses who lazed and loafed on their subordinates were perforce obliged to earn instead of thieving their money; the work was better done; the men's lives were more regular as their work was—the docker had in fact become a man!"

Mr. Tillett, in this summing up, describes quite fairly what the union and the strike of 1889 did for the London docker. Since 1887 he, the first organiser of the union, has been its chief officer; and two other men, Mr. Harry

[1] Tillett, *Brief History of the Dockers' Union.*

Orbell and Mr. Harry Kay, identified with the Dockers' Union in its first year, are still its officials.

Of others who took an active part in helping the dockers in the strike of 1889: Mr. John Burns has been a Cabinet Minister since 1905; Mr. Tom Mann has lived continuously the agitator's wandering life; Mr. Llewellyn Smith has been knighted, and holds an important office in the permanent Civil Service; Mr. Vaughan Nash has resigned a private secretaryship to the Prime Minister to become vice-chairman of the Development Commission; Mr. Clement Edwards is a Member of Parliament and barrister-at-law. Tom M'Carthy, of the stevedores, was worn out by the life of a dockers' organiser after ten years and died in September 1899. Cardinal Manning, to whom more than to any other man was due the settlement, was eighty at the time, and lived but three years longer.

No sooner was the London strike won, and the Dock, Wharf, Riverside, and General Labourers' Union firmly established, than the other ports were attacked and branches of the union were formed in Bristol, Hull, Swansea, Cardiff, Newport, and Southampton.

Liverpool soon had its own dockers' organisation, with branches at Hull and in Scotland—the National Union of Dock Labourers, founded by Mr. Richard M'Ghee and Mr. Ed. M'Hugh—and Mr. James Sexton has been the general secretary of this society for twenty years.

Both these unions have had a very fluctuating membership all the time. Numbers join and leave annually; branches are created, flourish, and then melt away. In 1912 the membership of the Dock, Wharf, Riverside, and General Labourers' Union stood at 50,000, and the National Union of Dock Labourers at 24,000, according to the report of the Trade Union Congress. Yet in 1910 the membership was only

18,240 and 14,253 respectively. From 1901 to 1910 the Dock, Wharf, and Riverside Union membership varied between 13,929 and 18,240—falling to 11,908 in 1905—and the National Dock Labourers swung from 13,307 to 14,253 in the same period of years.

In neither society are sick, accident, or unemployed benefits paid, but the weekly contribution of 3*d.* a week ensures a funeral benefit of £4 in the event of death, and 12*s.* 6*d.* weekly dispute pay during a strike or lock-out.

Both Mr. Ben Tillett and Mr. James Sexton have stood as parliamentary (Independent Labour) candidates on many occasions and for various seats, but without success. Mr. Sexton, however, is now a J.P.

If the Dockers' Union was first in the field of the new unions, the Gasworkers' and General Labourers' Union has been consistently the strongest. Founded by Mr. Will Thorne, himself a gasworker, in 1889, its work has been the organisation of the unskilled labourer all over Great Britain, and the reduction of the daily hours of labour—especially in a gasworks—from twelve to eight. The eight hours' day is now the common rule not only at the gasworks but in many other places of toil, and for its acceptance as a normal working day Mr. Thorne and the Gasworkers' Union may justly take some credit.

Beyond all other labour unions the Gasworkers' has maintained that political power must be placed in the hands of the organised working class, and the funds of the union have been freely spent on parliamentary elections. Mr. Thorne, general secretary of the union from its birth, has been a member of the West Ham Corporation for nearly twenty years. He contested South West Ham for Parliament, unsuccessfully, in 1900, but was returned by enormous majorities in 1906, and in 1910 at both elections. The late Pete Curran, chief organiser of the union from 1889 till his death in

1910, fought five parliamentary elections during that time, and was only successful on one occasion, sitting as M.P. for Jarrow for two years in the House of Commons. Mr. J. R. Clynes, M.P., organiser of the Lancashire district of the Gasworkers' Union, has been elected three times (1906 and 1910) for North-east Manchester. In many other districts the local officials of the union have been elected to seats on City Councils, and it is an understood thing by the rank and file that their officers will take part in political life as fully as possible. The Gasworkers' Union was born in the years of the Socialist agitation; hence its general secretary and its officers have always declared their faith in Socialism, and at political elections—parliamentary or municipal—have always stood as Independent Labour candidates.

The constitution of the Gasworkers' Union allows a good deal of local autonomy. The headquarters are in London, and there are various districts of not less than 2000 members—London, Birmingham, Bristol, South Wales, Lancashire, Yorkshire, N.E. Coast, &c. Each of these districts elects its own secretary and organiser and its own local council. A general quarterly council of all the districts is held in London, and the final authority in the union is the Triennial Conference of the districts. To the local council each branch—that is, every section of labourers—sends its delegates. When the present writer was a member of the Yorkshire district council of the union—some twenty years ago—it was customary to meet once a fortnight on Saturday afternoon, and the chief business done was the consideration of claims from various bodies of workmen in the union for assistance. Either an increase of wages was desired, or a reduction of hours was to be obtained, or some irritating grievance remedied. Often enough no sooner were men in the union than they would press

their claim for immediate benefits, and clamour for a strike for another halfpenny an hour if the demand was not conceded within a few days of their joining the union. Much of the time at those old council meetings was spent on vetoing strikes, and explaining to impatient delegates that the district officials would negotiate with the employers on the matters in dispute.

While it is true that trade unions have made many strikes successful that would otherwise have been lost, and that the fear of a strike has very frequently driven employers to grant advances to their workpeople, it is equally true that the authority of the union has over and over again prevented rash and hot-headed members from hastily ceasing work, and has even commanded a return to work when an unsanctioned strike has taken place. The extra work entailed, the anxiety, the uncertainty of the issue, the possibility of defeat, and subsequent demoralisation and loss of membership, all tend to make trade union officials averse from strikes. Only when discussion leads to nothing and arbitration is refused will the governing committee of a union fall back upon the strike to remedy some intolerable state of affairs. On several occasions, however, in recent years the strikers have ceased work without any permission or sanction from their Executive Committee, and the said committee has not been strong enough to enforce obedience. Generally when the hands of trade union leaders are forced in this way it seems that the only thing to be done is to make the best of the situation and contend for victory—on the ground that an official is a salaried servant of the union and must carry out the wishes of the members. Sometimes this course is impossible to a self-respecting official, and Mr. G. N. Barnes, M.P., resigned the general secretaryship of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers rather than yield

to what he held to be a mistaken policy on the part of a large number of members.

The Gasworkers' Union has known the common troubles of new unionism in the matter of unstable membership. The weekly payment of twopence does not bind men so closely to the union as a larger sum would. The mechanics' unions, with their shilling and more per week in contributions, soon draw an amount so considerable from each member than he will not lightly forfeit the promised benefits by letting his payments lapse.

But men will pay their shilling entrance fee into the Gasworkers' Union and their twopence weekly contribution under some stress of emotion; and then perhaps the casual work they were engaged upon comes to an end, and they go off to another town where no branch of the union exists, and the union is forgotten in a few weeks. Or it may be a season of trade depression and unemployment that makes thousands of penniless men lapse from the union, from sheer want of pence to keep up their contributions, no out-of-work pay being granted except at a strike or lock-out.

In 1901 the Gasworkers' Union membership stood at 46,014. It sunk to 29,631 in 1904, rose to 39,805 in 1907, dropped again to 32,040 in 1910 (with 360 branches), and then climbed up to 71,000 in 1912. Other labour unions formed in 1889 and still existing are the following: the National Amalgamated Labour Union, headquarters at Newcastle-on-Tyne, membership 47,000; the Gasworkers', Brickmakers', and General Labourers' Amalgamated Society, headquarters Birmingham, membership 6525; the National Amalgamated Labourers' Union of Great Britain and Ireland, headquarters Swansea, membership 5000; and the Navvies', Builders' Labourers', and General Labourers' Union, general

secretary Mr. John Ward, M.P., membership 2909. In each of these cases the figures of membership are for 1912.

The Sailors' and Firemens' National Union was formed in 1887, but it was not a registered society in 1910, and its membership has been far more irregular than that of any other new union. According to the Board of Trade its members in thirty-nine branches numbered 7000 in 1906, and had risen to 12,000 in 1910. Then at the Trade Union Congress of 1912 its delegates represented 60,000 members. Mr. J. Havelock Wilson, for many years the seamen's M.P. for Middlesborough, is responsible for bringing the union into existence and has been its foremost leader.

Two societies that are distinctly "new" unions, and yet whose members cannot by any stretch of imagination be classed as "unskilled" workers, may also be noted here: the Shop Assistants' Union, formed in 1891; and the Amalgamated Musicians' Union, formed in 1893.

The former has steadily increased its membership from 10,041 in 1901 to 21,426 in 1910, with 441 branches; but dropped to 19,828 in 1912. In line with the new unionism the Shop Assistants attach great importance to political action, and their representative, Mr. J. A. Seddon, sat in Parliament for the Newton division of Lancashire from 1906 to 1910. The Musicians' Union also shows a steady increase of members, the total membership standing at 3167 in 1906, and at 6000 in 1912. Its general secretary, Mr. J. B. Williams, a member of the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress, sat for some years on the Manchester City Council as a labour member; while its London organiser, Mr. Jesson, was a labour member of the L.C.C.

The distinctive note then, of all recent trade unions, is the belief in political action.

CHAPTER VII

TRADE UNION MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE

TRADE unions are self-managed and directed in constitutional fashion by rules approved by the Board of Trade. They are subject to the common law of the land, and are usually, but not invariably, registered; as co-operative and friendly societies are registered.

A member of a trade union acting, in the opinion of the elected governing committee of the union, against the interests of the union, or directly violating the rules he has promised to keep on his admission, is liable to expulsion, and being expelled, forfeits all prospective benefits his payments would otherwise have ensured. In this respect the trade unionist is in a similar position to the barrister, the solicitor, the medical practitioner, and the clergyman, all of whom are subject to deprivation of professional status and occupation on conviction of professional misconduct. It rarely happens that a trade unionist is expelled from his society, and still more rarely that he makes appeal to the Law Courts against the sentence.

To understand what the management and discipline of a large and important trade union mean, let us glance at what the Amalgamated Society of Engineers is doing and note how the work of this society—so famous in the annals of trade unionism—is done.

Founded, as we have already seen, in 1851, by the amalgamation of smiths', mechanics', and engineers' societies, the A.S.E. had at the start 11,829 members. By October 1912 it has become a world-wide organisation, with a total of 138,947 members, 600 branches in Great Britain, 25 branches in Ireland, 40 in Australia,

4 in Tasmania, 20 in South Africa, 1 in Malta, 1 at Gibraltar, 1 in India, 1 in Spain, 13 in Canada, and 41 in the United States, in addition to 27 new branches recently opened in Great Britain, South Africa, Australia, and America. The increase of membership has been very marked, rising steadily and at quickened speed decade by decade at the following rate :

1861—22,862 members.	1901— 90,943 members
1871—37,790 ,,	1910—110,733 ,,
1881—46,101 ,,	1912 (Oct.) 138,947 ,,
1891—71,221 ,,	

The responsibility for the welfare of these members is in the hands of an Executive Council in London ; an American and Canadian Council, New York ; an Australasian Council, Melbourne ; a South African Council, Johannesburg ; Organising District Delegates, District Secretaries, Branch Committee men, and other minor officials, all duly elected to their respective offices by ballot of members. The revision of rules and constitution is left to a meeting of delegates elected by all members, and these delegates are the supreme authority.

At the head office, Peckham Road, London, the Executive Council—a body of eight representing and chosen from the members in that number of divisions in Great Britain—sits daily. The general secretary of the A.S.E. (Mr. Jenkin Jones) and four assistant secretaries are also in daily attendance. Every month a report is issued to members giving, amongst other matters, an abstract of the proceedings at the Executive Council. Difficulties concerning rates of wages, the demarcation of work between kindred societies, and the attitude of employers to trade unions, which have not been settled locally are referred to the E.C. for adjustment.

The Organising District Delegates were formerly elected from and for seven areas in the United Kingdom, but increasing membership has necessitated an increase of organisers, and there are now twelve. According to rule: "They shall be elected for three years, and be eligible for re-election. Each district delegate shall be nominated and elected from and by one of the twelve districts in which he has worked and resided for the twelve months immediately preceding such nomination." Subdivided as they are these areas cover a wide field, and a considerable amount of travelling must be done by the Organising District Delegate. The present arrangement of organisers' districts makes Ireland, with branches at Belfast, Cork, Dublin, Waterford, &c., one division. Scotland, from Ayr to Aberdeen, forms the second division. Liverpool, Barrow, Preston, Chester, Douglas (Isle of Man), Holyhead, Carlisle, and Dumfries are in the third. The North-east Coast from Jarrow to Middlesborough, and the Tyneside, make the fourth. Yorkshire, excepting Sheffield, Doncaster, and Rotherham, are the fifth. Manchester, Bolton, and Oldham are the chief centres in the sixth; and Lincoln, Nottingham, Derby, and Sheffield in the seventh. The midlands, including Birmingham, Coventry, Crewe, Leicester, Shrewsbury, Stafford, and Wrexham, form the eighth; Kent, Middlesex, Essex, Oxford, Northampton, Norfolk, Suffolk, Hertford, and Bucks, the ninth. The London area is the tenth; Hampshire, Berks, Wilts, Sussex, Dorset, and Devon, the eleventh; and South Wales, with Bristol and Gloucester, the twelfth.

In the monthly report each O.D.D. gives an account of his stewardship—the branches visited, employers interviewed, joint conferences attended.

The District Secretaries of the A.S.E. are under the control of the Executive Council, and are not to be

confused with the Organising District Delegates. The tasks of the latter involve far wider and heavier responsibilities. The secretaries are elected according to the following rule: "They shall be nominated by and from the branches in their respective districts, and shall have worked and resided in their respective districts for twelve months immediately preceding such nomination. Candidates shall have been seven years members of the society, and shall not be 10*s.* in arrears. They shall be nominated not less than twelve weeks, and elected not less than four weeks, before taking office."

Each branch has also its committee, with secretary, treasurer, and sick stewards—the business of the stewards being to look after those members incapacitated from work by illness or accident, and consequently in receipt of benefit allowance.

The wages of the general office staff in 1911 amounted to £2897, 9*s.*; the salaries and travelling expenses of the district delegates to £2161, 12*s.* 9½*d.*; salaries of local treasurers to £1732, 11*s.* 6½*d.*; auditors, £2058, 11*s.* 5*d.*; branch secretaries, £7873, 17*s.* 5*d.*; other branch officers, £4043, 6*s.* 11*d.*; district committees and their officers, £5862, 16*s.* 2*d.* Altogether the bill for salaries in the A.S.E. amounted to £32,856, 18*s.* 3½*d.* in 1911, and the total expenses of management to £49,955, 15*s.* 9*d.*—working out at 8*s.* 6¾*d.* per member.

And what of the benefits to members? Trade unions loom so large in the public eye when strikes or lock-outs are taking place that the benefits they dispense all the year round as friendly societies, and the advances in wages gained by peaceful negotiations, are apt to be overlooked. Take the benefit monies paid to members by this one typical trade union, the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, in 1911. By far the heaviest item of expenditure is the superannuation benefit, which

amounted to £141,807, 9*s.* 10*d.* Then comes the expenditure on unemployment (including dispute pay during strikes), and for sending members to situations, amounting to £82,714, 3*s.* 4½*d.* The sick benefits took £59,327, 13*s.* 1*d.*; accidents and loss of tools, £8956, 1*s.* 7*d.*; funeral payments, £16,335, 10*s.*; benevolent grants, £3320, 10*s.*; and various local levies to trades councils and payment of full wages to members on union business, £7247, 15*s.* 11*d.*; making a grand total of £314,709, 3*s.* 9½*d.*, and working out at £2, 14*s.* 2½*d.* per member.

Some idea can be formed from these figures of the finances of a great trade union, and the honesty, care, and business ability required and displayed by workmen in the management of their own affairs. For it must be remembered that all the official posts in such a society as the A.S.E. are restricted absolutely to members, and a jealous exclusion of non-workmen makes any interference in the management by well-meaning outsiders, or any notion of a "career" in the trade union movement for political adventures, equally impossible.

The only persons not in the A.S.E. who are paid by the society for their services are the chartered accountants called in for the annual audit.

The advances in wages and reductions in hours gained by the A.S.E. for its members in 1911 are also to be considered. In spite of the labour "unrest" no serious dispute troubled the society, and discussion and conference prevailed.

"Advances have been obtained" (so writes the General Secretary in his annual report) "for the Clyde and Scotland generally; also thirty-one districts in England, including the North-east Coast. Advances have been granted in Belfast and Ireland generally, and

practically every town in Wales has received substantial advances, and in some towns a substantial reduction in the weekly working hours. We have also made an agreement with the Employers' Federation establishing a uniform code of rules, with reduction in hours, in Government yards when our men are employed by Government contractors. In all we have about forty districts where advances in wages have been made, ranging from 1*s.* to 4*s.* per week. These advances have been obtained for the operative engineers by interviews or local conferences by our officials, and failure to effect settlement by local conference advances have been obtained through the second court in the form of central conferences with the Employers' Federation."

The A.S.E. is affiliated to the General Federation of Trade Unions, has three of its members in Parliament, but for some years past has sent no delegates to the Trade Union Congress.

As with the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, so with other trade unions of long standing.

The rules may, and do, vary. In some cases the Government is highly centralised, as it is with the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, and all power is vested in headquarters. In other cases we have the district councils and delegates, and an executive sitting as a court of reference or appeal.

Generally a conference or delegate meeting is required every few years for revision of rules and constitution.

Current opinion favours local autonomy, and it is urged that the spasmodic and unauthorised strikes of railwaymen, often entered upon not only without permission but in defiance of headquarters, are partly caused by the want of a stronger local authority and the remoteness of the seat of government.

The belief in parliamentary representation and in

coming economic changes to the advantage of the workmen, and the willingness of members to contribute to political levies to further these changes by legislation, are deeper and stronger in some trade unions than in others.

The General Secretary of the A.S.E. declares in the last annual report of his society that "The primary objects and functions of a trade union are to obtain and maintain satisfactory conditions of labour and wages, and the hours of labour to suit modern times; also to promote an ideal social condition through the union and through Parliament."

It is doubtful whether the average trade unionist is interested in the "ideal social condition" more ardently than the average person outside the unions; but it is quite certain that a very large number of the members of the skilled trades unions are convinced as heartily as the leaders of the labourers' unions are convinced that direct representation in Parliament is invaluable if wages are to be maintained or improved and hours of labour reduced.

In the matter of friendly society benefits all the older unions have their responsibilities; and the honesty, care, and ability displayed by the A.S.E. are seen in the management of these unions.

Where the work is of a highly technical character, as in the cotton industry, the union officials are required to have expert knowledge of all the details of factory work; and generally the trade union organiser must know to a nicety the intricacies and refinements of the employment whereat the members of the society, whose accredited agent he is, are engaged, to the end that he may judge clearly the extent of a fair day's work. Only with such knowledge can the trade union organiser deal competently with the demands of members for

better terms or resist encroachments of employers on existing conditions.

Some account of the management of the A.S.E. has been given; very briefly we may touch upon the finances of certain other old-established societies, taking in each case the figures published in the last Board of Trade report.

The Operative Bricklayers, formed in 1848, show the declining membership found in all the trade unions connected with the building trade. From 38,743 in 1901 the membership had gone down to 23,284 (in 328 branches) in 1910. In that year £594 was paid to unemployed members; £1389 in dispute pay; £24,724 for sick and accident benefits; £12,501 for superannuation benefits; £3799 for funeral benefits; and the expenses of management, salaries, &c., came to £10,478. The Bricklayers are affiliated to the Trade Union Congress, but not to the General Federation of Trade Unions.

The Operative Stonemasons of England and Wales, formed in 1833, have declined from 18,684 members in 1901 to 7055 (in 258 branches) in 1910. They paid (1910) £425 unemployment; £3 dispute pay; £1243 sick and accident benefits; £5999 superannuation benefits; £1134 funeral benefits; and spent £3805 on management. The Stonemasons are affiliated neither to Congress nor to the General Federation, and have sent no member to Parliament since the retirement of the late Henry Broadhurst.

The General Union of Operative Carpenters and Joiners, formed 1827, had 7301 members in 1901 and 5653 (in 161 branches) in 1910. The benefit payments for 1910 were as follows: unemployed and travelling, £3495; dispute pay, £180; sickness and accident, £1847; superannuation, £2477; funeral, £423; other benefits and grants to members, £224. Cost of management, £3169.

The general secretary of the union, Mr. W. Matkin, J.P., has a seat on the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress, but the old political activities of the society have ceased to be conspicuous.

The Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, formed 1860, had 67,018 members in 1901 and 55,785 (884 branches) in 1910. Its benefit payments in 1910 were as follows: unemployed and travelling, £63,530; dispute pay, £1309; sick and accidents, £40,741; superannuation, £53,617; funerals, £6377; tool and other benefits, £4568. Cost of management, £30,351. The Amalgamated is affiliated neither to the General Federation nor to Congress. Local federations of the building trades societies are the rule. Twenty such federations exist, and six of these federations are united in a union of Building Trades Federations of the United Kingdom formed in 1897.

The Durham Miners' Association, formed 1869, is the largest union in the Miners' Federation. It has strenuously and successfully worked to bring all the miners in the county within its fold, and the membership has risen from 81,858 in 1901 to 121,805 in 1910. It paid the following benefits in that year: unemployed, £39,279; dispute pay, £2654; sick and accidents, £85,319; funerals, £7169. No superannuation benefits are paid. Management expenses, £13,211—a remarkably low figure in comparison with many societies. The Durham miners have many of their representatives on the Durham County Council; and their veteran chief officer, Mr. John Wilson, M.P., who was born in 1837, and helped to found the association, has sat in the House of Commons for Mid-Durham since 1890.

The Associated Ironmoulders of Scotland, formed 1831, keep a very steady membership, the numbers only varying from 7832 in 1901 to 7880 in 1910, and the

highest figure in the interval showing 8296 in 1908. The benefits paid in 1910 were as follows : unemployed and travelling, £7271 ; sick and accidents, £300 ; superannuation, £12,920 ; funerals, £2695 ; dispute pay, *nil.* Working expenses, £2533. The Associated Ironmoulders are affiliated both to the Congress and the General Federation.

The Steam Engine Makers' Society, formed 1824, could not be persuaded to come in when the amalgamation of engineers' societies took place, 1850–1, and it has preserved a separate and not unprosperous existence. Its membership has risen from 8976 in 1901 to 13,401 in 1910. The following benefits were paid in that year : unemployed and travelling, £9698 ; sick and accident, £6799 ; superannuation, £9406 ; funerals, £1781 ; other benefit grants, £118 ; dispute pay, *nil.* Management expenses, £4221. The Steam Engine Makers are affiliated to Congress, but not to the General Federation. The headquarters of the society are at Manchester, and there are 144 branches.

The United Machine Workers' Association, formed 1844, is another old and small society which keeps its independence and flourishes. Here too a steady membership, with an upward tendency, is recorded, the figure rising from 3917 in 1901 to 4886 (in 71 branches) in 1910 and 6700 in 1912. The following benefits were paid in 1910 : unemployed, £4674 ; sick and accidents, £2281 ; superannuation, £511 ; funerals, £361 ; other benefit grants, £33 ; dispute pay, *nil.* Management, £2406. Mr. M. Arrandale, J.P., the general secretary of the United Machine Workers, is a member of the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress, but the union is not affiliated to the General Federation—the engineering and shipbuilding trades having their own national federation. The United Boilermakers'

and Iron and Steel Shipbuilders' Society, formed 1834, also shows a steady upward tendency, with 48,113 members in 1901, 49,393 in 1910, and 56,000 represented at the Trade Union Congress of 1912. The unemployed benefits were small in 1910, only amounting to £170; but the dispute pay reached £93,731. Sick and accident benefits were £37,934; superannuation, £47,879; funerals, £8207; benevolent grants, £9527. Management (including a depreciation of investments to the serious extent of £12,806), £36,823. The Boilermakers are affiliated to the General Federation; and their secretary, Mr. John Hill, has contested more than one parliamentary election.

The Amalgamated Association of Operative Cotton Spinners, founded 1870, increased its membership from 39,787 in 1901 to 54,475 in 1910. It paid in 1910 £93,533 unemployed benefits; £18,328 dispute pay; £7039 sick and accident benefits; £8161 superannuation; £1082 funerals; and £1040 leaving trade benefits. Management, £10,798. The Cotton Operatives are affiliated to the General Federation, invariably have one member on the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress; and their representative, Mr. A. H. Gill, M.P., of the Bolton Cotton Spinners, has sat in the House of Commons for Bolton since 1906.

The National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives, founded 1874, is another society of increasing membership, the figures being 28,011 in 1901, 30,197 in 1910, and 37,000 in 1912. Unemployed benefits in 1910 amounted to £9955; dispute pay, £1695; sick and accident benefits, £12,345; funerals, £1436. Management (central executive office only), £3418. The union is affiliated to the General Federation and to Congress; and had a representative, Mr. T. F. Richards, in Parliament, 1906–1910. In Leicester and in other towns

of the boot and shoe industry it sends representatives to the local corporations.

The Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, founded 1871, has more than doubled its membership in the last ten years, the numbers going up from 55,941 in 1901 to 75,153 in 1910 and 116,516 in 1912. In 1910 it paid £5100 unemployed benefits; £4460 dispute pay; sick and accidents, £2235; superannuation (lump sums for disablement), £7101; funerals, £1895; orphan fund, £9720. Management, £46,880. Three of its officers are in Parliament—Mr. W. Hudson, M.P., Newcastle; Mr. Thomas, M.P., Derby; and Mr. G. J. Wardle, M.P., Stockport. The general secretary of the A.S.R.S. is a member of the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress, but the society is not affiliated to the General Federation.

The Typographical Association (provincial), founded 1849, and the London Society of Compositors, founded 1785, and probably the oldest of existing trade unions, keep up their membership, the former advancing from 16,600 in 1901 to 21,436 in 1910, the latter from 11,355 to 12,231 during the same period. Both societies have representatives in the House of Commons; Mr. G. H. Roberts, M.P., Norwich, belonging to the provincial association, and Mr. C. W. Bowerman, M.P., Deptford, to the London Society. Mr. Bowerman is also the secretary of the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress. The Typographical Association paid the following benefits in 1910: unemployed, £16,357; dispute pay, £462; sick and accidents, £65; superannuation, £12,911; funerals, £2074. Management, £5865. The London Society, 1910: unemployed, £23,697; dispute pay, £893; sick and accidents, £235; superannuation, £11,005; funerals, £2756. Management, £4657.

The Amalgamated Union of Cabinet Makers, founded

1833, is a small and ancient society which preferred its independence when the Alliance Cabinet Makers and Cabinet and Chairmakers (Scotland) joined forces and became the National Amalgamated Furnishing Trades Association in 1902. Its membership in 1901 was 2518, and 2587 in 1910. It rose to 3093 in 1907, but was unable to keep at that level. The following payments were made in 1910 : unemployed, £2983 ; dispute pay, £41 ; sick and accidents, £1164 ; superannuation, £1219 ; funerals, £300 ; other benefits, £157. Management, £1332. It is affiliated to Congress.

The twelve societies whose finances we have here overlooked are thoroughly representative. They are societies of long standing and of many trades, and their information is sufficient for some understanding of trade union management and methods. There is no uniform scale of benefits, and the sums paid by the different societies vary considerably ; but the proportion of expenditure on disputes, on friendly society benefits, and on management may be seen in the following summary made by the Board of Trade of the average annual expenditure for the last ten years (1901–1911) of the hundred principal trade unions : disputes, £245,534 ; unemployed, £613,968 ; superannuation, funerals, and benevolent grants, £954,325 ; management, £480,790.

We can see perhaps more clearly how the money goes in the following extract from the Board of Trade Report :

> Out of every £1 spent by the hundred unions during the three years 1908–10, 2*s.* 8*d.* was expended upon dispute benefits ; 6*s.* 2*d.* upon unemployed benefits ; 7*s.* 6*d.* upon sick, superannuation, funeral, and other friendly benefits ; and 3*s.* 8*d.* upon working and miscellaneous expenses. The corresponding distribution for the years 1901–10 taken together was : dispute benefits, 2*s.* 2*d.* ; unemployed benefits, 5*s.* 5*d.* ; sick, superannuation, funeral, &c., benefits, 8*s.* 3*d.* ; working and miscellaneous expenses, 4*s.* 2*d.*

CHAPTER VIII

WOMEN IN TRADE UNIONS

In the days of the "Grand National Consolidated Trades Union," 1833–4, when Robert Owen's propaganda brought a rush of the working class into unionism, many women's societies existed. "The Grand Lodge of Operative Bonnet Makers vies in activity with the miscellaneous Grand Lodge of the Women of Great Britain and Ireland; and the Lodge of Female Tailors asks indignantly whether the Tailors' Order is really going to prohibit women from making waistcoats." [1]

Depression followed quickly, the lodges of female bonnet makers and tailors disappeared, and for forty years women had neither part nor lot in trade unions, the spasmodic attempts at organisation during those years bringing no accomplishment.

In 1874 Mrs. Emma Paterson, the daughter of a London schoolmaster and wife of a cabinetmaker, set on foot the Women's Trade Union League (originally the Women's Protective and Provident League) and the National Union of Working Women. Mrs. Paterson, "the real pioneer of the modern women's trade unions," attended the Trade Union Congress for ten years, and roused sympathy and attention amongst the delegates for the large army of unorganised, overworked, and underpaid working women in the country. Mrs. Paterson was several times nominated for a seat on the Parliamentary Committee, but never obtained election. At the instigation of Mrs. Paterson and Miss J. G. Wilkinson, in 1885, Congress for the first time

[1] Webb, *History of Trade Unionism.*

voted a resolution in favour of women's suffrage. But Congress always supported restrictions on women's labour in opposition to Mrs. Paterson's view.[1]

Miss Gertrude Tuckwell and Miss Mona Wilson (now an Insurance Commissioner) were later the moving spirits in the Women's Trade Union League, and active support was given to the formation of trade unions among workwomen (the object of the League) by the late Sir Charles Dilke and the leaders of the unions of cotton operatives.

The following are the declared objects of the Women's Trade Union League :

ORGANISATION.—The League is willing to send organisers to any London or provincial district to form new or strengthen existing trade unions.

LEGISLATION.—The League acts as the agent of women trade unionists in making representations to Government Authorities or Parliamentary Committees with regard to their legislative requirements, or in bringing forward specific grievances in individual trades or factories, by means of questions and representations by Members of Parliament in the House of Commons.

Complaints as to grievances and breaches of the Factory and Workshops Acts, when sent to the League, are investigated carefully and referred to the proper quarters.

Cases under the Compensation, Truck, and other industrial laws referred to the League, are investigated and advice given by the secretary of the Legal Advice Department and the League's legal advisers.

SOCIAL WORK.—The League arranges entertainments and weekly club nights and social evenings for members and their friends.

By the Women's Trade Union League came the National Federation of Women Workers into existence

[1] Mrs. Paterson died December 1886, and Congress was represented at her funeral by Henry Broadhurst, M.P. "Her views on restrictions of women's work were always unpopular, but she expressed them fearlessly, and no lady delegate was ever more respected."—W. J. Davis, *History and Recollections of British Trade Union Congress.*

in 1906, for the purpose of uniting "for their mutual protection workwomen who are engaged in unorganised labour."

The Federation in 1912 had seventy-four branches and "close on 15,000" members, and its aims and activities are similar to those of the average trade union. It sets out :

To improve the conditions of employment of working women; to watch their interests, and secure the redress of individual or collective grievances.

To regulate the relations between employer and employed.

To secure fair payment for services rendered.

To give legal aid to members as far as the law allows.

To provide a weekly allowance for members when ill or in distressed circumstances.

To support financially members who may be involved in a dispute with the sanction of the Federation.

To administer benefits under the National Insurance Act.

Miss Gertrude Tuckwell and Miss Mary R. Macarthur are president and secretary respectively of the Women's Trade Union League and the National Federation of Women Workers.

The extent of the work of the National Federation may be gathered from the fact that it disbursed £1150, 12*s.* 10*d.* in strike pay in 1912.

Some of the advances in wages obtained (1911–12) in London must be recorded if the value of the work is to be appreciated.

In Bermondsey :

At Pinks' jam factory the wages were raised from 9*s.* to 11*s.* per week.

Biscuit-makers : 1*s.* rise all round for time workers.

Bottle-washers : Minimum wage, 12*s.* (being a weekly increase of 2*s.* to 2*s.* 6*d.*).

Metallic capsule manufacturers : All day workers to have 1*s.* 6*d.* advance after three months' service. Minima of 13*s.* and 14*s.* in different departments ; piece rates increased.

Tin-box makers: Minimum wage, 10*s.*; advance of 1*s.* a week all round to day workers; increased piece rates.

Box and packing-case makers: All-round advance of 2*s.*; beginners to have 7*s.* weekly for three months' learning; girls under 16, 9*s.* a week; girls over 16, 12*s.* a week.

Cocoa-makers: Graded scale, with minimum wage to start at 14 years of age 4*s.* 7*d.*, increasing every year until 18, 12*s.* 4*d.*; piece-workers on day work to be allowed 3*d.* an hour; piece rates to be increased. This means improved wages for every worker.

Glue and size makers: 1*s.* advance all round.

Tin-box makers: Increases of 1*s.* 9*d.* to 4*s.* weekly.

It is estimated that the rises in wages obtained by the Federation amount to some £7000 per annum.

In Clerkenwell:

Confectionery works: A minimum wage of 12*s.* weekly for girls of 19 years was fixed. Before this time many women had earned 6*s.* 10½*d.* and 8*s.* for a full week's work. The firm state that these increases are costing them at the rate of £3000 per year.

This Clerkenwell dispute was finally referred to a Court of Arbitration, when the following award was given:

In no case shall a female working on piece rates receive less than the following time rate for her particular age:

Time Rate for Piece Workers

Under 15 years of age	5*s.* per week.
15 and under 16 years of age	6*s.* 6*d.* „
16 „ 17 „ „	8*s.* „
17 „ 18 „ „	9*s.* „
18 and over	10*s.* „

Any difference between the piece rate earned and such time rate shall be made up to her by her employers.

All female workers in the above trade working by time shall be paid a time rate of not less than the amount set out below, varying according to age:—

TIME RATE FOR FEMALE WORKERS WORKING BY TIME

Under the age of 15	5*s.* per week.
15 and under 16 years of age	6*s.* 6*d.* „
16 „ 17 „ „	8*s.* 6*d.* „
17 „ 18 „ „	9*s.* 6*d.* „
18 „ 19 „ „	11*s.* „
19 years of age and over	12*s.* „

Provided that any female worker entering the trade at or over the age of 17, having had no previous experience therein, and not coming under the provisions of paragraph 1 of this award, and being employed in time work, shall receive at least the following rates for such time work in lieu of the above:

1st six months of employment	8*s.* per week.
2nd „ „ „	9*s.* „

and after that at least the rate applicable to her particular age as set out above.

A constant obstacle to the progress of the National Federation is the heavy percentage of lapsed members every year. In this respect the unions of badly paid workers—whether male or female—are all equally handicapped.

Comparatively only a handful of women belong to the National Federation, for the trade unions of the textile trades take over 83 per cent. of the women trade unionists in the country. It is not often realised by those outside the trade union world how very considerable are the numbers of women unionists in Lancashire alone, and that these numbers steadily increase, as the ranks of the women unionists in other trades increase.

The Cotton Weavers have forty-four unions, and 105,560 female members and 43,470 males;[1] while the Cardroom Operatives, with seventeen unions, have 43,421 female members (an increase of 4587) and 9299 males (an increase of 1002). In the linen and jute trade there are thirteen unions, and the female members

[1] Board of Trade Report on Trade Unions, 1908–10.

outnumber the male by 17,319 to 8283, the female membership showing an increase of 2852 and the male a decline of 514. Altogether the total number of women trade unionists in the textile trades at the end of 1910 was 183,019, the increase on the returns of 1907 being 8200. The only decline was amongst the weavers, where, since 1907, the women unionists have lost 4866 members and the men 3420.

Of the other trades where women are enrolled in unions with the men the boot and shoe claims 1401; tailoring, 2301 (an increase of 1200); the hat and cap, 3333; printing and paper, 2724; shop assistants, 6021 (increase 1000); miscellaneous and general labour, 14,764 (increase 3940); and employment under public authorities, 6349 (increase 1541).

It may be seen that where women are employed in large numbers, and in associated labour as in the cotton trade, the trade union has become recognised as a necessary institution. Female shop assistants, clerks, and post-office employees have also in recent years accepted the trade union; though here, as with the male, the difficulty of class feeling exists, the trade union being still regarded in many cases as essentially a workman's organisation, unworthy of those who in manners and customs hold themselves to be of the middle class. (For the same reason the National Union of Teachers holds itself aloof from the trade union movement and joins neither the Trade Union Congress nor the General Federation of Trade Unions.)

There are many evidences that this social pride is diminishing, and that the employees of the retail shop and the office are turning to trade unionism, as mechanics and labourers have done, to secure better wages and shorter hours. Especially is this the case in the larger business, where courage and confidence are begotten

in a multitude of employees. Where only one or two clerks or assistants are employed the probability is they will not be unionists.

As for domestic servants, waitresses, and barmaids, the idea of trade union organisation no more appeals to them than it does to footmen, waiters, and barmen. In the case of a large staff of domestic servants, male and female, engaged in one house, the trade union would be as heartily disliked as a "democratic" institution—savouring of revolutionary violence—in the servants' hall as it would be in the drawing-room. While the solitary general servant, in the house where only one servant is kept, is generally far too tired when her leisure comes to think of industrial amelioration and organisation.

It is possibly because barmaids and waitresses do not regard their occupation as a permanent profession that the appeals of unionism leave them cold. For to the majority of women marriage and its attendant housekeeping mean prospectively release from other employment. The actress, the singer, the writer, the factory worker, and the charwoman can remain in their callings when married, but not the waitress, the barmaid, the female clerk, or shop assistant.

The woman worker of the textile factory, and of the National Federation of Women Workers, enjoys all the benefits from trade unionism enjoyed by men. The women workers outside and untouched by trade unionism are either satisfied with their conditions of employment, or despair of getting them altered and hope for escape by marriage.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

THE stability of the British trade union, its constitutional and orderly methods of procedure, its anxiety to be recognised as an entirely lawful and useful ingredient of society, are phenomena observed and remarked upon—generally with astonishment mingled with respect—by foreign critics.

No less remarkable is the readiness of trade union leaders to take part in the making and administration of the laws; to sit as Justices of the Peace side by side with employers of labour on the local Bench of Magistrates, and in similar company on Municipal Councils and in the House of Commons. All this willingness to be accepted as good citizens, and this easy capacity for co-operation in the business of government with capitalists and employers, puzzle the social revolutionist, for whom the class struggle is a fact only to be ended by the economic extinction of all who are not of the working class.

Again, the stability of our trade unions is a good deal connected with their financial investments. The total funds in hand, at the end of 1910, of the hundred principal trade unions amounted to £5,121,529, and this was no exceptional figure, for the amount in 1901 was £4,129,927, and the balance has advanced fairly steadily year by year.

Of this £5,121,529, banks held £1,689,060; £156,484 was invested in consols; £1,814,956 in corporations and public trusts; £67,553 in railways; £343,967 in freehold and leasehold property; £616,508 in mortgages; £50,371 in trading firms, including co-operative societies; and

£20,439 in building societies. Possessing this balance of five million pounds—invested in corporation and railway stock, in land and houses—the leading trade unions have a very considerable stake in the country, and their officials have, naturally, scanty patience for the notion of destroying, or superseding, the State by a social revolution.

This partly accounts for the lack of support given to Social Democrats at elections and to the proposals of Syndicalists ; for there is a grave doubt in the minds of trade union treasurers whether the funds of each man's particular union might not be tampered with or diminished—at the worst be lost—should a social revolution occur. The preservation and maintenance of a substantial balance at the bank is quite properly an all-important matter to the trade union treasurer. An impoverished exchequer leaves the union defenceless against possible demands of employers for reduction of wages ; for without provision of dispute pay for some weeks ahead no union of any considerable membership can threaten a strike or hope to resist successfully a lock-out. Money is the armament that decides most commonly every campaign fought between capital and labour by strike or lock-out, and trade unions and federations of employers are aware often enough that a stout reserve fund is the only guarantee against attack.

With all the existing conciliation boards, joint conferences, and other machinery of industrial arbitration in this country, there always remains on both sides the knowledge that any disputed point of hours or wages may finally only be decided by a total stoppage of work. And this must be so in any country where compulsory arbitration is not the law of the land.

As neither employers nor trade union leaders—with a few notable exceptions—are in favour of compulsory

arbitration, and there is division of opinion as to the success of the experiment in New Zealand, the strike, or lock-out in the last resort, remains the battle-ground of industrial warfare, and the length and strength of purse will as a rule, but not invariably, determine the result.

Nevertheless the costliness of a strike or lock-out, and the heavy expense it frequently imposes on thousands (occasionally millions) of non-combatants, are seen and deplored very widely to-day, and voluntary arbitration boards, for the settlement of disputed points in the conditions of daily work, abound.

While the evidence is all against the probability of our British trade unions moving consciously towards revolutionist and syndicalist ideas—for the elected officers of the unions are men of orderly mind and habit, and the money and other property of the unions are too big to be thrown lightly away in a social upheaval—it is advisable to note in some of the unions the frank discontent of the younger generation with the methods of their official leaders. This lively discontent has, on more than one occasion in the last few years, produced a strike unsanctioned by the authority of the union, and has compelled that authority to countenance what it lacked strength to prevent.

Advisable is it also to note that this younger generation are favourably inclined to the sympathetic strike, and the direct action of the general strike, and will "down tools" without formality of notice and in defiance of contracts. Is this the rashness of glorious youth, the heroic courage of inexperience, or a definite policy, the outcome of certain economic dogmas and social convictions? Something of both probably, and as yet no one can tell the depth of the convictions. Meanwhile a new precedent has been set in strike

settlements, December 1912, by the infliction of a fine of a week's wages as the condition of returning to work after an unauthorised and spasmodic stoppage on the North-Eastern Railway. That the condition has been accepted is not without its significance too. For in spite of effervescent outbursts of rebellion against the constituted authority of the trade union, rising at times to actual mutiny, the loyalty to the elected officers is deep-rooted in the rank and file, and is not speedily to be upset.

High office in a trade union is the reward of faithful service, and election to the chief posts is the tribute of members to a zealous devotion to their cause.

No one can foretell the future developments of trade unionism. Changes will occur, must occur, here as elsewhere in the body politic. But we are a slow-moving people, doubtful of novelties, quick to resent innovation. Convinced that trade unions have wrought countless advantages to the working people, and therefore to the nation, men of all classes and creeds approve their existence. We cannot indeed picture modern industry on the large scale without trade unionism. Should the large industry be transferred from private to public control the trade union would still be necessary, for Government employees in the post-office service and in other departments have been persuaded by experience of the need of association for self-defence.

The principle of trade unionism is the principle of mutual aid—a powerful factor in human evolution.

Trade unions impose a restraint and a discipline on the egotism that would sacrifice all for self-advancement. They help to pull the weak and unstable into line and develop self-respect by kindling the sense of fellowship and *esprit de corps*.

In spite of all the mistakes and follies of trade unionists

their good work is amply acknowledged, their leaders are honoured, the memory of their pioneers is respected.

Not for many a year will it be possible to say with truth that trade unions are no longer wanted, that the day has come when the working class would be better without trade unions.

The dawning of such a day is not yet within the vision of mankind.

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